COACH AND BUS WEEK

CBW

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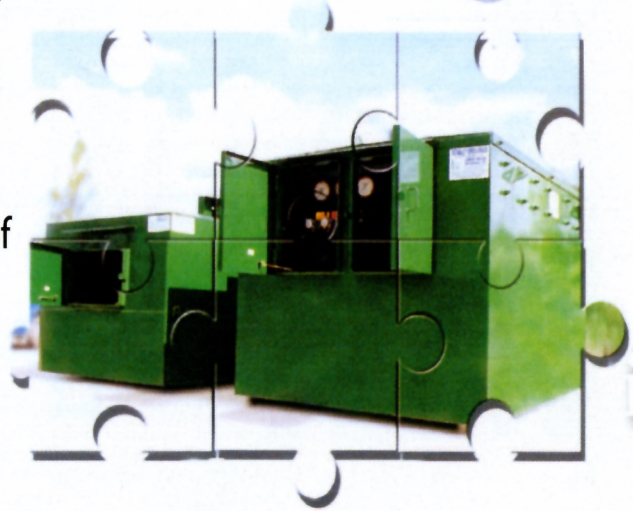

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COACH AND BUS WEEK CBW

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COVER STORY Tour giant WA Shearings launches 15 new Grand Tourer coaches as it aims to conquer Europe in 2006

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KENT COUNCIL 'BANS' O FROM TENDERING

Two contracts lost when Chalkwell questions new council rules

A KENT coach operator has lost two school contracts after questioning new rules, issued without consultation by Kent County Council.

Sittingbourne-based Chalkwell Coach Hire has for many years had its contracts with a local school extended at short notice but was shocked to be told that as they came up for renewal in December, they would be retendered because Chalkwell hadn't agreed to the new conditions.

"The letter about the new conditions said nothing about accepting them," said operations manager Roland Eglinton, who has passed a copy to *CBW*. "It only asks us to confirm receipt. When we returned the form, we explained our concerns to KCC."

Mr Eglinton said those concerns had also been aired at a meeting of Kent operators towards the end of last year, at which his company was represented. The first he knew of the decision to debar Chalkwell from tendering was when an escort on one of the services brought back a letter to parents which explained that there would be a new operator.

"When I called KCC to find out what was going on, I was told we hadn't been asked to retender because we hadn't agreed to the new conditions. I believe that we are being made an example of because we questioned KCC's new conditions," Mr Eglington told *CBW*.

"We are not alone in having lost contracts for this reason. Operators I've spoken to about this situation are shocked. We've given 20 years' or more service to the council, and all business relationships have their ups and downs. But that's been blown out of the water. There can be no trust between us now."

In a letter to KCC, MD of Chalkwell Clive Eglinton explained that the changes to contract were issued with no consultation and just three weeks' notice. He says one of the rules is contradictory, some unworkable, and some actually contravene PCV legislation: "...it would have been more productive and less expensive

NATEX DIGBETH DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

NATEX'S ambition to, literally, rebuild the image of coaching in the UK takes another step forward this week as the company reveals more of its plan to redevelop Digbeth Coach Station.

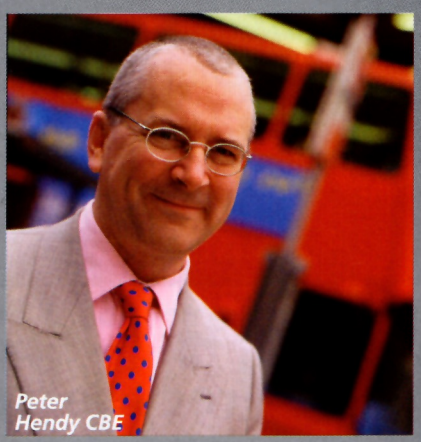
Just days after the finishing touches were added to its Central Bus and Coach Station at Heathrow, NatEx has submitted plans to Birmingham City Council for a temporary interchange to allow for the rebuilding of Digbeth.

The site, previously a car showroom, is directly opposite the old station and, if planning permission is granted, will boast better facilities than the one it replaces, according to NatEx.

The company will take a short lease on the site until mid-2008 by which time Digbeth should be back up and running. NatEx has appointed MAKE architects to design the new Digbeth station – the provisional plans will be on show at the public consultation at the end of January.

NEW YEAR'S HONOURS FOR INDUSTRY CHAMPIONS

CONGRATULATIONS from *CBW* to the four public transport executives awarded honours in the New Year's Honours List.


Peter Hendy CBE

Peter Hendy – managing director of surface transport at Transport for London and tipped to replace the outgoing commissioner of TfL Bob Kiley – gets a CBE, "for services to public transport and the community in London".

James Lee, managing director of Travel Dundee gets an MBE for services to public transport in Scotland.

Chris Moyes, chief executive at Go-Ahead and chairman of GoSkills, gets an OBE, also for services to public transport.

Alan Dell, network liaison manager at London Buses, is awarded an MBE for his actions on 7 July and for, "services to the bus industry".

TRURONIAN FIRE

TRURONIAN is left counting the cost after a New Year's Eve fire at its depot in Cornwall destroyed seven vehicles and damaged two more.

Police say the fire was definitely the work of arsonists although no arrests have been made and the motive for the attack is unclear.

Flames were spotted just after 9pm last Saturday evening by one of Truronian's drivers. He and two colleagues immediately alerted the services and moved vehicles away from the blaze. The firm later paid tribute to the drivers.

"We are extremely appreciative of the prompt action our drivers took which helped to contain the damage," Truronian director Geoff Rumbles told *CBW*. "The police and fire brigade say it is definitely a case of arson and we are assisting them with their investigation."

None of Truronian's services were disrupted by the fire – not even its New Year's services.

What's angered Kent operators?

New contract conditions say:

- **Operators must indemnify the council of all personal injury liabilities, no matter what the source**
- **The council demands right of access to operators' offices and accounts without prior notice**
- **Demands eight-seaters be licensed by the council, despite primary legislation allowing the use of O licences**
- **Wants the right to test vehicles at any time, at cost to the operator**
- **Demands the right to see employee records, which may contravene the Data Protection Act**
- **Asks operators not to say that they are under contract to the council**

for the county council to consult with the operators engaged on KCC school contracts to bring to bear their knowledge, practical experience and their concerns to produce fair and workable documents," says the December 12 letter.

In a statement, Kevin Harlock, KCC commercial services director, says, "Kent County Council, in accordance with normal good practice reviewed its Terms and Conditions for Home to School transport in September 2005 and circulated these to the some 480 operators who provide this service over the County – one of which is its own in-house operator.

Nearly all operators accepted the minor revisions without question, probably because there was little change from the previous version. Chalkwell Coach Hire was not prepared to accept the new terms, standard within the industry, as late as mid-December which meant they were unable to tender for work to commence in January."

Kent County Council has already caused concern by publicly announcing it is out to get coach work usually considered commercial on a not-for-profit basis, using its fleet of more than 50 vehicles. It has refused to show accounts for its operation – Commercial Services – both on the request of Kent ratepayers and under the Freedom of Information Act.

KCC's tendering and contract allocation unit is now based at the same headquarters as Commercial Services, at Kings Hill, in West Malling.

Rotala settlement

ACCORDING to a statement released to the stock market on December 30, Rotala – parent company of the Flights Hallmark Group – has reached a final settlement with Flights' previous owner, Central Parking System, and several former employees of Flights and CPS.

For the full story see *www.cbwnet.co.uk*.

INVESTIGATED

Three Scolabuses and four double deckers were destroyed. Two other vehicles had minor heat damage, now repaired. There was no damage to the depot itself.

Six of the vehicles were immediately replaced by Ensign Bus. Another 57 seater is due to be picked up from Dawson rental.

Scottish passenger body plans

THE Scottish Executive has put plans for a new public transport passenger's body out for consultation.

The new organisation will be called the Public Transport Users' Committee (PTUC) and will have influence on what the Executive calls, "high-level, strategic issues" like concessionary travel and integrating different modes of transport.

There are two options for how PTUC will develop: either it will unite and replace existing passenger committees or become a forum for those committees.

The Executive backs the former option, saying, "It is essential the remit of the PTUC is clear – it needs to avoid duplication of responsibilities and seek cooperation on issues of common interest."

The consultation lasts until 22 March 2006. For more information see *www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations*.

ARCHER:
The column everyone's talking about – page 15

EDITOR'S COMMENT

Ups and downs

THINGS seem to be going from bad to worse for some Kent operators as the council tightens the screws.

The new contract conditions handed out as an edict last October – giving just three weeks' notice – amounts to some 16 pages dealing with complex areas of law. Despite the council's assurance that little had changed, a few of the major points were a cause for operators' concern.

Already worried that that the council's contracting department is housed at the same place as its Commercial Services operating arm, and that the council had, on its website, declared its intention to trade in the open market with its vehicles, some of the county's operators called a meeting to discuss the situation. Among them was Chalkwell.

I offered to attend the meeting to hear operators' concerns, but the meeting organiser was worried that inviting the Press may seem inflammatory, and politely refused.

Chalkwell's action after the meeting was to equally politely highlight what it saw as flaws in the new contract conditions, and return an annotated copy with the response form. It is in front of me now – it asks Chalkwell to acknowledge receipt of the document, and nothing more.

You would have expected the council to respond to Mr Eglinton's concerns, but no. His queries were registered as dissent and his card was marked as not being willing to comply with the new conditions, and thus ineligible to tender.

Not that the council told him any of this. He found out through a letter to parents, gleaned by one of his school escorts.

One has to hope that this is simply a misunderstanding, and that it will be resolved by compromise, but the fact that the new contract was itself drafted without consultation with operators doesn't bode well. Nor does it seem likely that Chalkwell will get its contracts back.

As Roland Eglinton has said, all relationships have their ups and downs. The 'ups' are almost invariably the result of progress through co-operation, and in the schools market, this has never been a more important aim.

Mark Williams

Mark Williams
EDITOR

Grand plans for WA Shearings

Tour giant launches GT brand as it looks to rule 2006

ANDREW JAROSZ, CBW CORRESPONDENT

WA SHEARINGS, the newly-merged tour giant has kept true to its word in blending the best of its two constituents, with the emergence of the new Grand Tourer brand, ready for the 2006 season.

New coaches delivered last week upgrade the Wallace Arnold product with new specification coaches, whilst fitting in quite neatly into the new corporate colour scheme devised to bring the two companies together.

Twenty new Volvo B12M coaches have been ordered for the new season, ten bodied by Van Hool and ten by Plaxton. Fifteen are to the new GT specification with 36 seats, destined for mainly Continental work, and the remaining five Plaxtons will seat 46 for UK tours. All are air conditioned and fitted with toilets.

The new GT specification, builds upon the success of the Wallace Arnold branding, first introduced in 2002, with the latest leather upholstered Fansia seats, with three-point belts and audio-DVD sound system on every one. The company has deleted the five seater lounge at the rear of the WA version to provide a very large floor-mounted toilet and cloakroom, with the servery moving round to the nearside. The rear area and continental door is separated off by the glass-arched partition from WA days.

The livery follows the new corporate style introduced in December for the whole fleet, which combines Shearings base blue with WA orange swirls. The WA Shearings fleetname, first used after the merger, has been embodied in a new global logo, and was chosen 'because it trips off the tongue'. (*CBW* June 16).

The new GT livery discards the WA black (as well as the wheel spats) and highlights the gold base with brown relief, in the corporate scheme.

WA Shearings Transport Director Jimmy King told *CBW* the new image was chosen after comprehensive market research. "We found that the rear lounge was not very well used, and we have replaced the small sunken toilet with a larger floor-mounted one, and also increased the seat pitch throughout the coach."

Increasing sales for Scania/Berkhof combination

SCANIA Bus & Coach says it has been encouraged by the success of the 12.9m Berkhof Axial 50 since it was added to its range of body options last year.

A batch of vehicles has already been sold and the company is now keen to extend its relationship with the VDL Group bodybuilding subsidiary. It is planning to order more of the type for its 2006 portfolio.

Managing director Geoff Bell said: "There is a long tradition of Scania Berkhof coaches in the UK and operators are attracted to the combination for a number of reasons. Scania's driveline performance, reliability and economy are extremely well proven in operation. The Berkhof Axial 50 12.9m, built to EU Directive EC2001/85, is especially versatile and well appointed. It can be specified for operations ranging from consumer services to international touring."

The coach is based on a Scania K114 EB 4x2 380 chassis with an 11 litre DC11-04 engine developing 380bhp. Customers can specify either a Scania GR 875 eight-speed Opticruise gearbox or a ZF 6HP 602CHT fully automatic. Standard seating arrangements are 53, 55 or 57 complete with air conditioning, centre sunken toilet, hot drinks machine and fridge.

All of the initial batch has been supplied with relatively high specification for use on touring programmes. Customers include Classic Coaches, Amport & District, Gaytime Travel, John Shaw, Leons, Minsterley Motors, Mainline Travel, Watts Coaches and The Kings Ferry.

Six Primos for East Yorks

EAST YORKSHIRE Motor Services has ordered six Plaxton Primo minibuses for delivery in summer 2006.

The newly launched 28 seat low floor bus was chosen for its compact dimensions and will be used on difficult-to-negotiate housing estate roads.

Peter Shipp, EYMS Group chairman, says, "The Primo is exactly what we've been looking for to use on routes where clearances are tight.

"For our customers and our drivers it marks a significant advance on small buses with high floors and front engines."

Redwing refreshes fleet with Touros

REDWING Group has ordered ten Touro full-size coaches and one Tourino midicoach from Mercedes-Benz importer Evobus (UK).

The London-based company is well known for its regular fleet renewal – in 2005 it bought 32 new vehicles out of a total fleet of 75, including the six new Beulas delivered at the end of last year (see Deliveries, pages 28-29). Redwing itself (Reliance Travel of Gravesend and the newly acquired TWH Travel complete the group) boasts that all its 45 vehicles are air conditioned and less than two years old.

All the new coaches will have automatic gearboxes, air conditioning and alloy wheels and are destined primarily for UK touring work.

Citroen Relay repeats Minibus of the Year award

CITROEN'S Relay minibus has won the What Van? Minibus of the Year title for the second time in succession.

Judges considered the overriding benefit was in the value for money offered by the package which retails from £12,995 plus VAT and delivery. They noted: "This is not a low-grade conversion that has been chucked together."

Converted by Advanced Vehicle Builders of Clay Cross, all eight to 16 seat Relays are now certified to M1 seating standards and have been upgraded to Enterprise specification level at no additional cost.

This adds an RDS stereo radio/CD player, driver's airbag and antilock brakes. Standard equipment already included remote central locking, heated and electronically adjusted mirrors, electric front windows and an engine immobiliser. It can also be supplied with an underfloor passenger lift as the Relay Xcessible.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bus driver killed

A LONDON bus driver was killed last week after becoming trapped between two bendy buses. Michael Hallinan, 54, a driver for South East London & Kent Bus Company Stagecoach, died after the incident in Greenwich High Road early in the morning. The exact circumstances of the incident are unclear at present, although no passengers were involved. The other driver, a 62 year old male, was arrested on suspicion of causing death by dangerous driving but was released later on bail.

Council admits errors

WEST Sussex County Council has admitted mistakes were made and management controls were insufficient to prevent a £6m cost overrun on its 'Fastway' project. An auditor's report says WSCC had shown, "ineffective accountability, complacency, ineffective risk management and a lack of clear ownership of the financial management responsibilities". WSCC accepts the report's findings but says it will not take any action against those in charge of the project. It blames the cost increase on inflation in the construction industry.

Roadwork nightmare

STAGECOACH says the upcoming three months of roadworks on the A40 in Gloucestershire will be "catastrophic" for its local services. The road is being resurfaced, with improved drainage, and better paths and will be kept open during the week using temporary traffic lights, but may be closed completely at the weekends. The council says its plans were put up for consultation. The work starts at Huntley on 9 January and will move down the road in phases, ending in Birdwood at the end of March.

New stops in Barnsley

BARNSLEY Interchange has closed and the stops temporarily relocated while a new £24m bus station is built on the site. The temporary stops are situated on the old east bus station near Gala Bingo, and will be in place for around 18 months. The new facility is expected to open in Spring 2007 and will feature real-time info, CCTV and a café.

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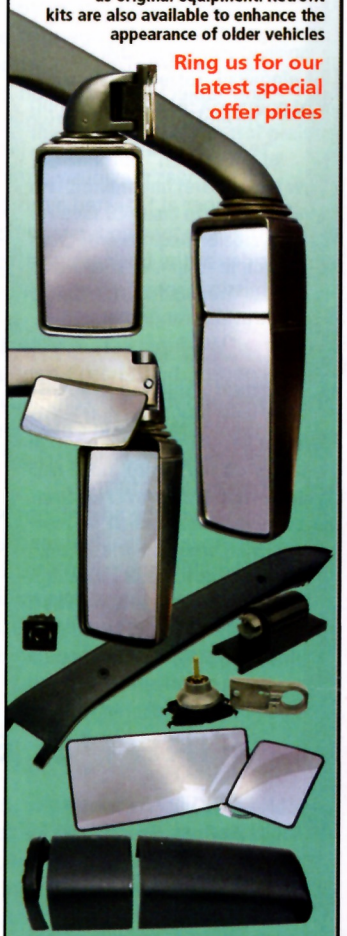
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THE FUTURE IS GREEN

Former teachers take on school run and say goodbye to yellow buses

ANDREW PEACE, CBW REPORTER

NEWLY incorporated Birmingham bus operator The Green Bus Company is ushering in a new era in home to school transport – but where it leads others will struggle to follow.

The company – grown out of a self-run service operated by King Edward Five Ways school, and subject to an MBO on 20 December – is run by two ex-KE teachers, one of whom – Ian Mack – was previously a transpot manager at Stansted airport. They say they understand both sides of the business, a factor missing from current school travel arrangements.

"We support the yellow bus concept, but it hasn't translated well into the UK," commercial director Mack told *CBW*. "Our idea takes the yellow school bus concept a bit further.

"One of the advantages is that we are both qualified teachers – therefore the schools trust us to a greater extent. We sit nicely on the divide between education and transport, our business is being an interface between the schools and transport."

GBC does not operate the buses itself, it tendered out eight routes – won by First, Stagecoach and local operator Zak's. Only Stagecoach buses are painted in the distinctive Green Bus livery at the moment although as the service develops it will be entirely branded.

GBC aims to offer a door-to-door service where possible – Mack has used his expertise as a geography lecturer to plot the most efficient routes – using two fare bands, one for short journeys and another for longer journeys. The cost to parents averages around £2 per day, which, says Mack is not too bad considering that some of the routes are 17 miles long. But the onus is on quality of service rather than cost.

"The level of interest has been absolutely phenomenal," says Mack. "We are riding the crest of a wave. This is a very viable proposition, it hits current demand on the head."

The business will turn over around £500,000 this year.

Green is not just an eye-catching colour to paint the buses – environmental concerns are at the heart of the project. The service was set up in 2000 by KE Five Ways – actually a group of seven schools – to tackle congestion and pollution outside the school gates.

"Ridership has increased from 50% to over 80%, taking 600 car journeys a day off the roads and congestion has, according to Mack, "evaporated".

FIRST'S STOKE SERVICES UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

A BIG row is brewing in Stoke-on-Trent over the performance of First Group bus services.

The leader of the ruling Labour council says the situation is so bad that the council should set up its own bus company. First says chronic congestion is the cause of the problem.

The council is inviting the local First Potteries management to a meeting to address the transport issues in the city.

First Potteries MD Paul de Santis told *CBW*, "We have heard from the local media that we will be invited to appear before the Council's Overview and Scrutiny committee but we have not received it yet – when we do we will be declining it. We do want to talk with the council but not in a political forum. We have an agenda of our own – we are extremely concerned about levels of congestion in the city.

"We have invested in new buses and other improvements in lost mileage and maintenance, but what good is a new bus if it is stuck in traffic?"

First has been beset by problems in the city since its license was capped – now raised – by the Traffic Commissioner eighteen months ago. Fare rises, withdrawal of loss-making services and strike action have caused relations between the company and the council to break down.

Labour group leader Mick Salih told *CBW*, "Tell me a city where there isn't congestion, that's a poor excuse. We have a lot of problems with First Group – like the routes they are withdrawing without giving much notice, especially the semi-rural routes. We spend over £300,000 on subsidy – I don't have a problem with subsidy, but I do have a problem with the quality of the bus services."

Salih will meet with three local MPs early in the New Year and lobby them to table amendments to the 1985 act to allow Stoke to set up its own operation.

De Santis describes the council's plan to start up its own bus company as "comical", saying, "I'm talking from a town with its own municipal owned bus company – the fleet is older than ours and they recently had to rationalise services to meet costs – so that isn't the answer."

Fifty coaches wanted for Spanish festival

DEMAURIS Associates is looking for around 50 coaches to fulfil a contract to transport students to the CalellaFest in Spain.

The CalellaFest, billed as the biggest and best sports festival for UK university students, is held at Calella near Barcelona on 2-8 April 2006. Demauris expects around 2500 UK students to attend.

Demauris has held the contract for four years now and says while the students themselves can be boisterous, and leave plenty of rubbish behind them, actual damage is 'nil'. The operation in Spain will be overseen by experienced staff. Drivers will be accommodated in a 4 star hotel.

● Speak to Robin or Clare on 01302 726590 for more details.

Crash driver 'over limit'

A FIRST bus driver in Scotland who crashed into a bus stop last week was allegedly four times over the drink drive limit.

Two people waiting at the stop were injured, though none seriously. The 38 year old driver, who was uninjured, had only been working at the firm for two months before the accident happened late on Saturday evening.

A spokesman for First said: "We take drink driving very seriously. We have a clear alcohol policy, which also includes breath-testing of all staff. We can confirm that this driver no longer works for the company."

Grayling is new shadow transport secretary

CHRIS Grayling MP has been named Shadow Secretary of State for Transport in David Cameron's new shadow cabinet team.

After entering parliament in 2001 Grayling, MP for Epsom and Ewell, served on the Transport Select Committee for eighteen months before becoming Shadow Higher and Further Education minister and then spokesman on Nutrition, Obesity and Complimentary Healthcare. He joined the shadow cabinet after the election in 2005 as Shadow Leader of the House of Commons.

Prior to becoming an MP, Grayling was a TV producer for BBC News and a Channel Four business programme.

Pupils 'riot' on bus

A DRIVER on a Stagecoach school bus in Gloucester was forced to call the police after the students started a "mini-riot".

There were reports of children lighting fires and trying to break windows, all of which have been denied by the school which says there are issues with over-crowding. The two will now meet to hammer out the issue.

Police confirmed they were called but say they will take no further action. The incident has been recorded as "inconsiderate behaviour".

NEWS IN BRIEF

Cushioning the bump

SPEED bumps in parts of Banbury are being replaced with "speed cushions" as part of a package of measures designed to improve bus services in the town. New information boards and poles are also being installed at bus stops. The cushions compress as the vehicle passes over them to give a more comfortable ride.

IIP for Translinc

TRANSLINC's Transport Division has gained Investors in People (IIP) accreditation. According to the company, the assessor praised Translinc for, "its attitude to recruitment and retention of workers over 65 years of age", adding that, "the company displayed one of the best examples of non-discriminatory behaviour."

NYC strike 'cost $1bn'

THE three day public transport strike that paralysed New York City in December is estimated to have cost $1bn. Thirty four thousand Transport Workers Union members went on strike illegally over wage rises, health-care and pension rights and the retirement age. Details of the settlement are being kept under wraps for the time being. A judge imposed a $1m-a-day fine on the Union and threatened to send its leader to jail.

Family's fortune

THE Cosmen family, who sold its Alsa coach brand to National Express Group in December, has now amassed just over 18.5m shares in NEG – at a cost of over £160m, equal to a 12.3% stake in the company. Under the terms of the deal signed in October, the Cosmens – represented by Jorge Cosmen – are entitled to a seat on the board if its share rises above 8%, although at the time the family signalled its intention to build its share up to 15%. The shares are split between two companies, European Express Enterprises and Northern Express Enterprises.

Correction

WE have been asked to point out that the news item in our last edition about fines for Stagecoach companies after a sub-contractor fell through a skylight happened at Stagecoach London's Plumstead depot, not at the Clements Road, Ilford, HQ.

More triaxles and new depot as Dublin Bus plans spending spree

GABRIEL CONWAY, CBW IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

PLANS for significant investment in the Bus Atha Cliath (Dublin Bus) operation in Dublin are being prepared, with tenders being advertised for the supply of up to 250 new double-decker buses in 2007, including up to 50 three-axle high capacity deckers. A significant investment in new facilities is also in the planning stage, with the state-run company seeking suitably qualified consultants and contractors to design, develop and build a brand new, 250 capacity depot on the west side of the city.

For the new depot, the company is seeking submissions from bodies who will have "the full range of skills necessary in managing a project of this nature from initial assessment of potential site(s) through to supervising the construction and commissioning of the facility".

The request for tender goes on to specify that: "The contract will require full project management services from inception to completion and will include the following stages ;

- Assess potentially suitable site(s)
- Complete scoping study including provision of outline plan and cost estimate.
- Design to planning application stage and manage the planning application process.
- Following planning approval produce full design for the construction tendering process .
- Complete tendering process for the works.
- Provide construction management and supervision through to completion and commissioning of the facility

Bus Atha Cliath opened a new state-of-the-art depot at Harristown, beside Dublin Airport, in 2004, catering for up to 275 vehicles, and it is anticipated that the proposed West Dublin site will be to a similar specification, and will replace existing smaller depots at Ringsend and Conyngham Road, which date back more than 100 years to the tramway era.

More high-capacity buses and a new depot are planned for Dublin Bus

First Group faces second ASAI censure in 12 months

FIRST Group's Aircoach operation has been criticised for the second time in a year by the Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland (ASAI). A complaint from a passenger that the advertised journey time on one of it's routes was unrealistic, was upheld by the ASAI when the operator failed to respond to the investigation.

"The Code of Advertising Standards provides that any unreasonable delay in responding to ASAI's enquiries may be considered a breach of the Code. The Code also provides that an advertisement should not mislead by inaccuracy, ambiguity, exaggeration, omission or otherwise. The Complaints Committee wish to express their disappointment at the advertisers' failure to respond to this complaint" an ASAI spokesman told CBW.

The complaint, lodged by a passenger on the Port Laois to Dublin Airport service, alleged that the travel times shown were unrealistic in that a journey from Portlaoise to Dublin Airport took two hours and five minutes on a Sunday afternoon without traffic problems. The advertised journey time was one hour and thirty minutes. The complainant said that he missed his flight and suffered financial hardship

Aircoach: services affected by traffic congestion

Advertising rights on the CIE fleets are worth up to £15m

£15m advertising contract back up for grabs

THE largest outdoor-advertising contract in Ireland is back on the market after Maiden outdoor pulled out of a £15million deal to sell advertising space on across the CIE bus and rail fleets.

A spokesperson for CIE said that its preferred bidder for the contract – Maiden – had withdrawn from the competition after failing to meet financial requirements set out in the contract.

"We were finalising the contract with our preferred bidder. Part of the terms of the contract included that certain financial commitments were required."

The contract covers all outdoor advertising space across the three CIE companies: Dublin Bus (1100 vehicles), Íarnród Éireann (rail network and buildings) and Bus Éireann (2000+ vehicles) as well as 11,000 road and rail billboards.

Schools: your window on the future

Thursday, January 26, Barbican Centre, London EC2

Join CBW at the schools transport conference of the year

IF you want to get inside the minds of local authorities and have your say on schools transport, you could do no better than come to the School Transport '06 conference.

CBW has teamed up with the London conference's organisers to offer readers discounted rates for this conference and another in late February which may well give your company a bottom-line return.

School Transport '06 – a major event for the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers – will hear from Government how its Education White Paper will impact on the future of the school bus, grow the market and help operators and education authorities deliver the quality which is being demanded by parents.

Staged at the Barbican Centre, the one-day event kicks off with a keynote speech from a senior figure in Government. On the agenda are talks from West Yorkshire PTE Metro's director of corporate services Sheena Pickersgill, Sian Thornthwaite, consultant with Halcrow Group and National Association of Head Teachers president John White

The final session will explore what can be done with concessionary fares schemes for children, a talk from Mike Ashworth, assistant director of network management and customer services for Derbyshire County Council.

Late afternoon, delegates will be able to join a seminar discussing bus services and school contracts. Alternatively, you can join discussions on supporting college students, or school travel plans.

09:50	Introduction and Welcome Conference. Chair: Tim Davies, Head of Transport Co-ordination Service, Devon County Council, and Immediate Past Chairman, ATCO
10:00	Keynote speech: Speaker to be confirmed10:20 Questions and Discussion
10:30	European Experiences: Troels Anderson, Transport Co-ordinator, Odense, Denmark
10:50	Questions and Discussion
11:00	Refreshments
11:30	The Comprehensive Approach to School Transport Provision: Sheena Pickersgill, Director of Corporate Services, Metro
11:50	Calculating Demand and Paying for Additional Services: Sian Thornthwaite, Consultant, Halcrow Group Ltd
12:10	Walking and Cycling Strategies: Paul Osborne, Director, Safe Routes to Schools Project
12:30	Innovative approaches to school travel plans ● Catherine Rawas, Development Manager, Walk21 ● Patricia Keyes, Co-Chair Travelling to School Project, Department for Transport ● Penny Jones, Co-Chair, Travelling to School Project, Department for Transport
13:00	Buffet Lunch
14:00	Integrated Transport Creating Choice and Opportunity for Students Case Study: New Forest Schools in Transport Network: Roger Lockwood, Increased Flexibility Manager, Co-ordinator for Regional 14-16 Collaborative Partnership, Brockenhurst College
14:20	Transport Provision for Extended Schools: John White, President, National Association of Head Teachers
14:30	Delivering Concessionary Fares Schemes for Young People: Mike Ashworth, Assistant Director, Network Management and Customer Services, Derbyshire County Council
14:45	Questions and Discussion
15:00	Chair's Comments

SEMINARS

Bus Services and School Contracts
Facilitator: Tim Davies
Speakers: Neil Holt, Assistant Director, Transport Coordination, Metro; Linda Howard, Managing Director, First Student 16-19 Options –

Supporting College Students Supporting Walking and Cycling Schemes
Facilitator: Paul Osborne, Director, Safe Routes to Schools Project
Speaker: Troels Anderson, Transport Co-ordinator, Odense, Denmar School

Travel Plans - Best Practice and Innovation Workshop
Facilitator: Catherine Rawas, Development Manager, Walk21
Speakers: Patricia Hayes, Co-Chair, Travelling to School Project, Department for Transport Penny Jones, Co-Chair, Travelling to School Project, Department for Education and Skills
16:20 Close of Conference

Bus crime explored

Tuesday, February 28, Earls Court One, London

VANDALISM, violence and theft on buses are at an all-time high, so a conference on the subject was long overdue.

Earls Court One in London is the setting for Reducing Crime on Public Transport – a conference aimed at discussing and establishing best practice for operators and their contractors.

The one-day event hears from, among others, British Transport Police, the Crown Prosecution Service and passenger transport associations on successes and failures in combating bus crime.

As with the school transport conference, there will be two sessions followed by a choice of seminars for operators to attend.

The day includes refreshments and a buffet lunch.

● Full details of this conference next week

Money off for CBW readers

THE full price for School Transport '06 is £395 plus VAT, but *CBW* readers can take advantage of a specially reduced rate by calling Natasha Wildman on 0207 324 4357, or applying for registration by email at *Natasha.wildman@neilstewartassociates.co.uk* and quoting *'CBW'*

Reducing Crime on Publlic Transport normally costs £425 plus VAT, but again discounted rates can be obtained.

New EU hours ruling 'threat to coach touring'

European Tour Operators Association slams new draft legislation as 'triumph of fecklessness'

EUROPEAN coach tour operators are alarmed at the impact of new regulations on hours that drivers will be allowed to work, if new draft legislation from the European Parliament and the Council is approved. The European Tour Operators Association has branded the new ruling "legislative fecklessness" and warned of its effect on driver recruitment.

The proposed legislation will reduce the maximum driving time for professional drivers. At present they can drive for up to 74 hours a week. If the new law comes into force, no professional driver in Europe will be allowed to drive for more than 56 hours a week. This adds to recent EU regulations that limit the working time for professional drivers to an average of 48 hours a week over a four-month period.

Other measures include an obligatory minimum daily rest of 11 hours (instead of the present eight hours), an obligatory rest of at least 45 consecutive hours every two weeks and a 24-hour rest every six days. This would remove a degree of flexibility known as the 12 Day Rule, whereby drivers can take their rest at the beginning of one week and at the end of the following week, thus giving them up to 12 consecutive days on the road.

This last measure will be particularly harmful for drivers of extended coach tours. Hitherto they have been able to take their rest periods at home: tours had been devised to enable them to work for 12 days and then return home for their break. Now they will have to use their rest periods whilst travelling.

Tom Jenkins, the executive director of the European Tour Operators Association, said: "Coach companies already have difficulties with recruitment and retention of drivers. The cause is not the amount of work the drivers have to do, but the time they have to spend away from their families.

"As drivers will now have to take their 'rest' days on the road, this measure effectively halves their home leave. As a piece of 'social' legislation it is savagely counterproductive.

"Coach holidays are already the safest and least polluting method of conducting visitors. These measures harm the workers, increase the cost, reduce the flexibility of a tour and add substantial logistical problems.

"It thus encourages customers to use less safe and more polluting modes of transport: a triumph of legislative fecklessness."

CBW official support publication

CBW is pleased to be one of the official support publications for BTTF and will feature regular news items and previews in the run-up to the show. This year's event will be held at Birmingham NEC on March 1 and 2. For further information go to *www.britishtraveltradefair.com*

Ferry operator cuts commission for agents

DFDS Seaways, the leading cruise-ferry operator to Scandinavia and Northern Europe, is planning to cut commission rates for travel agents from seven to five per cent on the base rate of all transportation bookings secured. At the same time, it has confirmed that that commission on holidays and short break bookings will remain at 10 per cent of the base rate. The cut, as a result of competitive pressure in the market and the ever-increasing demands made on the industry from low cost airlines, came into effect at the beginning of the year.

Earl Spencer guest of honour at BTTF

IN a break from inviting politicians to open proceedings, the organisers of British Travel Trade Fair 2006 have invited Earl Spencer to be the guest of honour at the UK's biggest domestic travel and tourism industry event.

Earl Spencer's home – Althorp – is one of the UK's leading visitor attractions and houses an exhibition celebrating the life of his sister, Diana, Princess of Wales.

"We are immensely proud to welcome Earl Spencer and Althorn to BTTF," said event director Graeme Barnett.

"BTTF 2006 will focus on the range of travel and tourism opportunities available right here in the UK where the emphasis will be on the diversity of the UK tourism product. Althorp exemplifies this country's proud history and rich heritage."

BTTF attracted more than 2,500 trade visitors and Barnett expects to increase this for 2006. The theme of diversity has been taken for 2006 to remind and introduce people to what is available in Britain, right on their doorstep. In addition, VisitBritain's Hosted Buyer Programme will introduce Britain to around 200 buyers from around the world.

Britain's 2012 Olympic win means a 'Sporting Britain' theme was almost inevitable, but BTTF 2006 will also showcase heritage tourism, and Britain's fantastic food and drink offering. There will also be a special emphasis on family holidays.

"Today's children are the tourists of tomorrow," says Barnett. "If the industry can capture young imaginations now, the potential return is enormous."

Set fair: Earl Spencer with BTTF event director Graeme Barnett

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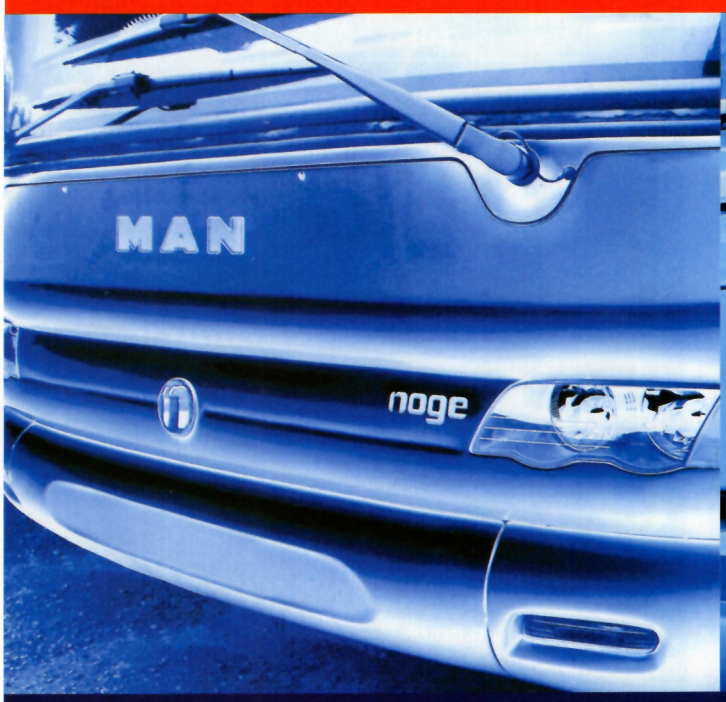

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Refit the old bushes and tighten the assembly. Wipe away any excess resin. Allow to cure for 1-2hrs. Return vehicle to service. It couldn't be easier!

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www.elichem.co.uk

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ARCHER

The column everyone's talking about

THE CORRIDORS OF POWER

A letter from senior traffic commissioner Philip Brown gives Archer a bit of optimism – but not for long…

CBW clearly gets read by some very influential people. Following my piece about 'Phœnix operators' in issue 703 our editor passed me a copy of a reader's letter about this subject written to him by Philip Brown, the senior traffic commissioner no less!

In it Mr Brown wrote: "As financial standing is one of the key requirements for an operator, Traffic Commissioners are always interested to learn of financial issues which arise in respect of particular operators". He then went on to say that: "Compliance staff in Traffic Area Offices are always pleased to receive information of any kind which may be relevant to an operator's licence to enable the necessary enquiries to be made so that case submissions may be sent to the traffic commissioner in appropriate cases".

applaud that.

We all know who the local 'ten gallon hats' are and I'm already compiling my dossier of bouncy cheque issuers, vehicles I've seen on school contracts with no licence disc on display and all the other "on the road" infringements I see daily on my travels.

I haven't decided yet whether I should send my dossier to our local Traffic Area Office (TAO) by snail mail or VOSA's intelligence people via the internet though. VOSA have National and Regional Intelligence Co-ordinators whose e-mail addresses can be found at:

www.vosa.gov.uk/vosa/vosalocations/vosaintelligenceareas.htm

But before you place too much faith in VOSA's intelligence (in any sense of that word) there are a few things you should consider. Most VOSA

> 'I'm already compiling my dossier of bouncy cheque issuers'

Now, I don't want to create a 'supergrass' culture in our industry, but this looks initially encouraging to me. The traffic commissioners seem to have finally decided that rather than persecuting 'soft touch' reputable operators and leaving the 'ten gallon hat' gang alone because they're a lot of hard work to pin down, the cowboys now ought (quite rightly) to be the focus of their attention at long last; and I think we'll all

enforcement people probably spend the greater part of their time looking at HGV matters rather than PSV ones (HGV licence holders do out-number PSV ones by about 17 to 1 after all), so they may not recognise the relevance of what you're telling them or understand the subtle nuances of PSV legislation.

Alleged tacho offences are a good example here. I've heard plenty about VOSA people giving PSV operators unexpected (and unwelcome!) visits, then alleging there's "unaccounted for mileage" in their tachograph records.

The definition of 'in scope' for a goods vehicle as far as tachos are concerned relates to its construction. 'In scope' for PSVs is related to their use. VOSA sometimes seems to find it hard comprehend this or recognise that "unaccounted for mileage" is purely an HGV thing. Plenty of reputable PSV operators I know, who've put a vehicle out on a day's worth of entirely 'out of scope' work without a chart in the tacho, have later been grilled by VOSA types over this irrelevant "unaccounted for mileage" issue.

Senior traffic commissioner Philip Brown is Archer's latest correspondent

Also, from time to time VOSA and the TAOs have potentially provided unwitting assistance to cowboys themselves through a lack of basic intelligence in the way they do things. Take the case of Harry, an operator near us. He successfully renewed his 14 vehicle licence about 18 months ago and an envelope containing his new licence document and discs duly arrived – followed a week later by another one with identical contents!

Fortunately, Harry's a straight guy. He did sit on the second envelope for quite a while though to see if and when his TAO would recognise their mistake. They never did, so he telephoned them.

The person he spoke to was extremely apologetic and told him simply to tear up the second set of documents, adding as an after thought: "But it might be handy to hold onto a couple of the discs in case you lose any"!

Now Harry's reputation for honesty may have gone before him here in the way he was told to deal with the second envelope, I don't know. But what would have happened if excess discs had been sent to a dodgy operator? Oh, and what happened to the notion that replacement discs cost £14 each?

Typical of Harry, he put the whole lot – envelope and all – through his cross-cut shredder as soon as he'd finished the phone call. I know plenty of people who wouldn't have though. As a result, they'd have been able to circumvent the financial standing requirements almost entirely and could have doubled their fleet size overnight, or – far more worryingly – farmed the excess discs out to wannabe operators who lacked adequate facilities, financial standing and professional competence.

If we can get these kinds of inefficiency out of the system then Philip Brown might get what he wants and what our industry deserves. Until then, the jingle of spurs is likely to remain.

THE KILLER SLEEP

Do you know what to do if one of your drivers has a sleep disorder?

PETER WOODHOUSE, CBW CORRESPONDENT

A RECENT BBC 'Real Story' feature on sleep disorders has triggered fresh concern over the dangers posed by drivers who suffer from sleep conditions.

The programme follows on from a number of high profile incidents which have severely tainted the transport industry in recent years. Three years ago, a lorry driver in Kent crashed into a car travelling on the opposite side of his carriageway after nodding off at the wheel, killing an engaged couple – the case ended up in the Crown Court where the driver was sentenced to eight years in jail and given a lifetime ban on driving. Unfortunately this was not an isolated incident and reflects a growing threat to the industry.

In this month's update we examine the severity of the problem and advise operators on how to best deal with it.

SLEEPINESS AS A MEDICAL CONDITION

OBSTRUCTIVE Sleep Apnoea ('OSA') is affecting about one in six British drivers according to the findings of last month's Respironic Study. Sufferers of OSA experience excessive daytime drowsiness as a result of having their sleep disrupted by obstructive breathing and snoring. During their sleep, the airway between the lungs and mouth frequently closes – either partially or completely – leading to a lack of oxygen and consequently, heavily fragmented sleep. When this goes on for nights on end falling asleep during the day becomes inevitable. For drivers with the condition, their situation can have potentially fatal repercussions; it is estimated that a worrying one fifth of accidents on our motorways are caused by drivers who have fallen asleep at the wheel.

Studies have shown a high correlation between OSA sufferers and increased motor vehicle collisions. Therefore, it is crucial for operators to be aware of the disorder and its diagnosis in order to limit the chances of having one of their vehicles involved in a road accident.

The results of last month's Respironic Study indicate that OSA is being recognised as a growing problem within the road transport industry. One in three of those drivers surveyed were found to have some form of OSA which suggests that the condition is far more widespread than many of us realise.

RESPONSIBILITY

LICENCE holders are legally responsible for informing the DVLA of any medical condition that a driver is suffering from. Form 'SL1' covers sleep disorders and must be submitted to the DVLA who will decide on any appropriate action that needs to be taken. The DVLA has recently emphasised that they must also be kept informed if it is merely 'suspected' that a driver is suffering from OSA. This places a fairly onerous duty on drivers and operators but ultimately, the dangers of road traffic accidents are rightly considered to be paramount.

The Traffic Commissioner must also be notified of any driver who has or is suspected to have OSA, even when they have been taken off driving duty. The Traffic Commissioner may call in the driver to determine whether his PCV entitlement should be suspended.

Road safety measures do come at a price for drivers though. Once diagnosed with OSA, their HGV licence is suspended until the DVLA are satisfied that the condition is controlled, forcing many to stay silent rather than risk their job.

TREATMENT

POSITIVE news for those in the industry is that OSA sufferers generally respond well to a treatment known as 'CPAP' (continuous positive airway pressure) which aids uninterrupted sleep by delivering air to the lungs through a small electronic pump connected to a nasal mask. CPAP has been found to have immediate effects and this should therefore calm fears that sleep apnoea requires extensive treatment. A recent study in Ontario discovered that the risk of motor vehicle accidents is removed when patients are treated with CPAP. Likewise, the DVLA accept that drivers' licences should be renewed as soon as possible after starting the CPAP treatment.

ACTION

FAILURE to appreciate the risks of OSA will have disastrous effects if a sleepy driver causes your vehicle to be involved in a crash. Although the driver will be primarily liable for any accident, Operators will also have liability if they should have been aware that their driver was suffering from OSA. This could result in a Public Inquiry, Crown Court / Magistrates' Court case which could even be for corporate manslaughter if a fatality is involved. Therefore, the following points should be keenly borne in mind:

- Ensure your drivers have regular medical checks and undertake a documented review to ensure that all licences and medical reviews up to date. Remember that after the age of 45, it is compulsory for HGV and PCV drivers to have a medical every five years and after the age of 65, every year.
- If standard medical examinations do not include a test for OSA, make it clear that drivers must disclose any sleep disorder symptoms that they have to their employer and/or the DVLA.
- Keep a close eye on drivers to check whether they seem overly tired. You should undertake further investigation if there is cause for concern and take appropriate action in such circumstances.
- With the recent Working Time Directive legislation further reducing driver's hours many in the industry may be forgiven for thinking that the days of sleep related accidents are over; unfortunately, this is not the case and all operators should ensure they take the steps outlined above to protect themselves, their drivers and the public from the consequences.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS, VISIT:

www.sleep-apnoea-trust.org/faq.html

www. dvla.gov.uk/drivers/dmed1files/group2.htm
(full details on how to inform the DVLA of medical conditions)

Any queries – please do not hesitate to contact the Bond Pearce Transport team on: 0117 989 6750 / 6722 / 6724
www.bondpearce.com

PI ROUND-UP

Keep up to date with the latest news as we bring you all the Public Inquiries in one neat bundle...

EASTERN

Public Inquiry (31806), Cambridge, November 4
JOHN LLOYD LTD T/A MATTHEWS COACHES
Director(s): JOHN PHILIP LLOYD.
WESTGATE STREET SHOULDHAM KING"S LYNN, NORFOLK, PE33 0BN
PSV - S17 - Condition varied to authorise 5 vehicles with effect from 2359 hours on 25 November 2005

Public Inquiry (31953), Cambridge, November 15
JARK RECRUITMENT LTD T/A JARK RECRUITMENT
Director(s): JOHN TIMOTHY BUCKMAN, DAVID JOHN SIMONS, PAUL MIZEN.
BEECHURST, 8 COMMERCIAL ROAD , DEREHAM, NORFOLK, NR19 1AE
PSV - S16 - Variation application granted for a further 8 vehicles only, making a variation to the existing condition to now authorise 13 vehicles.

Public Inquiry (31877), Cambridge, November 16
JOY FLOWERS COACHES LTD
Director(s): B J ODEBUNMI.
THE BUS GARAGE, SWANLAND ROAD, NORTH MYMMS HATFIELD, HERTFORDSHIRE, AL9 7TS
PSV - S17 - Licence revoked with effect from 2359 hours on 31st January 2006

NORTH EASTERN

Public Inquiry (31912), Leeds, November 17
R DAVISON T/A GREAT LIME COACHES
4 MEADWAY DRIVE, FOREST HALL, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE NE129RQ
S16 - Condition attached limiting vehicles from 2 to one vehicle with immediate effect Formal warning

Public Inquiry (31916), Leeds November 22
STEPHEN WILLIAM KEATS T/A STEVE KEATS OF SHEFFIELD
63 GODRIC ROAD, SHIREGREEN, SHEFFIELD, SOUTH YORKS, S 50AH
PSV - S17 - Formal warning in respect of convictions sustained, prohibitions issued and breach of undertakings.

WELSH

Public Inquiry (31789), Birmingham, November 4
MARGARET SUZANNE PROSSER T/A MAGGIE'S MINIBUS HIRE
16 CHANNEL VIEW, PENYGARN, PONTYPOOL NP4 8BN
As announced by the Deputy Traffic Commissioner his decision was as follows:-
- that the new application is refused

WESTERN

Public Inquiry (31741), Bristol, October 19
BLUEBIRD COACHES (WEYMOUTH) LTD
DIRECTOR(s): MARTIN EDWARD HOARE, STEPHEN FREDERICK HOARE .
83 THE ESPLANADE WEYMOUTH, DORSET, DT47AA
PSV - S16 - Condition varied to reduce the number of authorised vehicles from 25 vehicles to 12 vehicles for a period of 10 consecutive days to be implemented and completed by 23:59 hours on 10th January 2006.

Public Inquiry (31833), Bristol, November 18
BROOKS JOHN ERNEST CLAIRE DEBORAH T/A YATELEY TAXIS & COACHES
Partner(s): CLAIRE DEBORAH BROOKS, JOHN ERNEST BROOKS. PROSPECT HOUSE, 66 READING ROAD, YATELEY CAMBERLEY, HAMPSHIRE, GU46 7UH
PSV - S17 - Licence suspended for 7 consecutive days with effect from 2359 hours on 27/12/05.

SOUTH EAST AND METROPOLITAN

Public Inquiry (30462), Eastbourne, March 8 (Previous Publication:(2081)
SWALLOW COACH CO LTD
DIRECTOR(s): KEVIN WEBB, D R WEBB .
1 BARLOW WAY SOUTH, FAIRVIEW INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, MARSH WAY RAINHAM, ESSEX, RM138BT
Licence curtailed under Section 16(1)to 14 vehicles WEF from 1 January 2006

Public Inquiry (31783), Eastbourne, November 1
COLIN JOHN MUNT T/A C & M COACHES
10 ARCHER ROAD CHATHAM, KENT, ME5 8LH
PSV - S16 - Variation application to upgrade licence to SI refused as transport manager notfound to be of good repute
PSV - S17 - Licence suspended for 6 weeks with effect from 00.01 on Monday 28/11/05 to 23.59 on Sunday 8/1/06

Throughout 2006 we'll be bringing you even more Public Inquiry reports from the length and breadth of the country. Our team of expert writers will keep you up to date with all the latest legal news and advice, to ensure you don't end up before the traffic commissioner.

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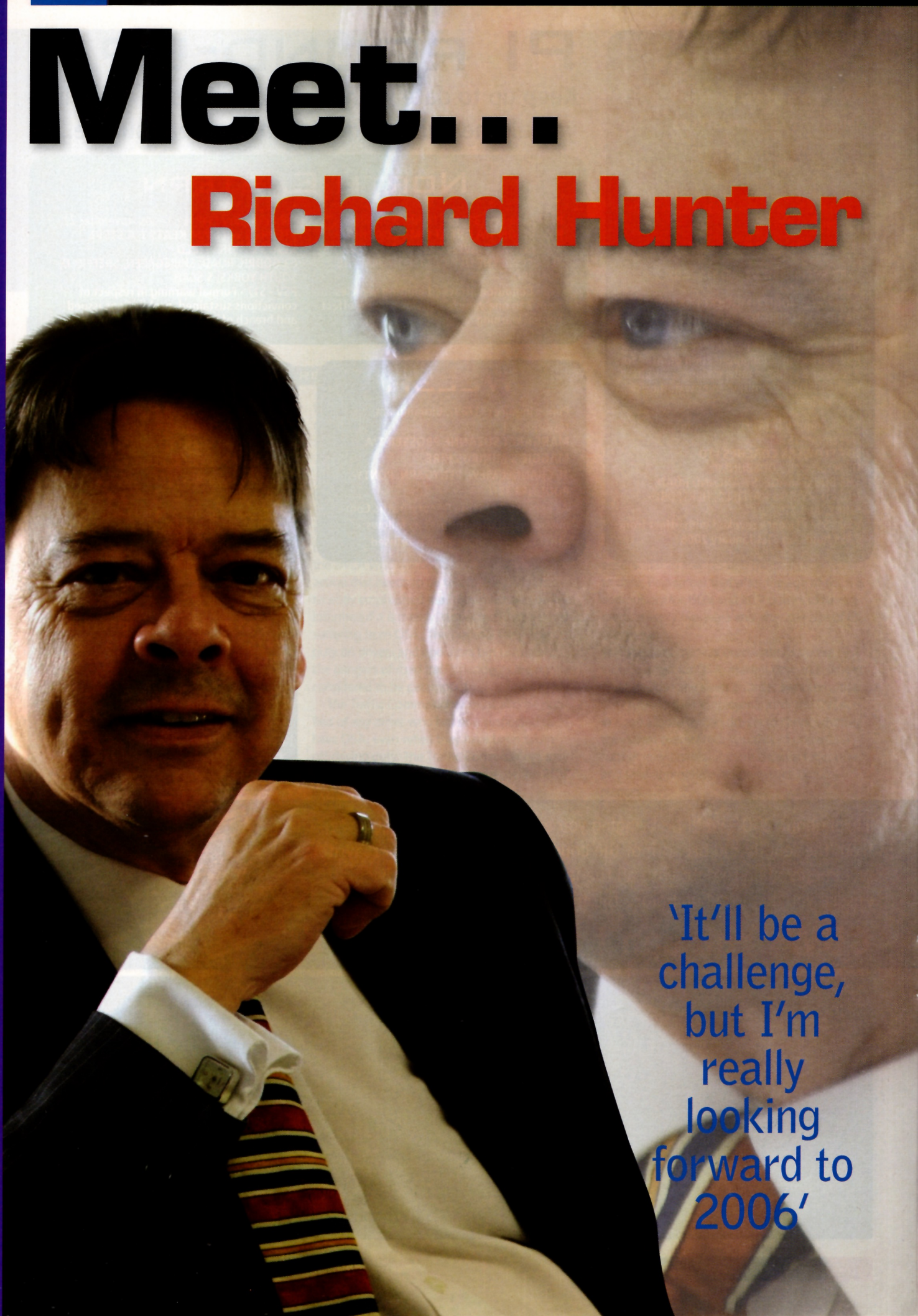
Meet...

Richard Hunter



'It'll be a challenge, but I'm really looking forward to 2006'

Salvador Caetano in the UK is under new management.... direct from Portugal. Group sales director Richard Hunter, the new 'face of the company,' talks to Mark Williams

RICHARD Hunter may be a little older than when I first talked with him on a high-speed dash across Ireland to JJ Kavanagh in the early days, but he still seems as frenetic as ever.

A fellow tobacco addict (who, like me, should give up for 2006), his four gigahertz mental process is supplemented by any opportunity to spark up another Dunhill, and as that usually means going outside, he's frequently to be seen in the yard or the workshop at Heather, and in similar fag-friendly locales around the factory at Waterlooville.

I know from personal experience that this also means he picks up all the best gossip. No surprise to me, then, that in the new management structure at Caetano, Mr Hunter has been delegated to do all the talking.

The departure late in 2005 of MD Mike Stannard – for 'health reasons' – precipitated a root-and-branch overhaul of the management team in the UK, led by Caetano Bus production director Jorge Pinto. The parent company had decided to leave the MD's seat vacant.

"It's a very flat executive structure," said Mr Hunter, with a mastery of understatement. In the new regime, five key managers jointly steer Caetano in the UK. Wayne Allen, Jonathan Highton, Russell Moon, Ian Tubbs and Mr Hunter have equal status in the company but defined areas of responsibility.

The change of direction comes with a change in the way Caetano UK serves its customers. For a start, Portugal is now building coaches for stock, so that each year the Heather yard will have ten homeless Enigmas in whatever seems to be the most popular configuration. They are delivered without toilets, but the development of the company's workshops allows for these to be added as required.

"In essence, we'll build, say, 45 vehicles to sell 35, carrying ten forwards into the following year," said Mr Hunter. "Every year we'd faced the situation where operators needed new coaches for new contracts, or some unexpected demand, and couldn't wait months to get them."

This year's stock vehicles have been Enigma on Volvo B12Bs with I-Shift and air conditioning – plus Enigma on chassis that had been pre-registered by National Express so they could continue to update the fleet until an acceptable wheelchair-accessible design had been produced. As we now know, National Express put their full and considerable weight behind the Caetano Levante – its joint project with Caetano – and then decided to make the change, leaving non-accessible Expressliner-spec vehicles available 'off the shelf.'

It was the Levante project that totally changed the complexion of business at Caetano UK – a project which the maverick Mr Hunter launched, nurtured and brought to fruition at great risk to his career. He garnered and got the support of Caetano in Portugal, Volvo and PLS, but his steely nerve, strength of conviction and a large measure of low cunning was the stuff that eventually secured an order for 100.

"I've got to give huge credit to Denis Wormwell and Bill Cahill at National Express, who backed the project from the beginning," said Mr Hunter. "The project developed its own momentum, with Volvo and now Scania involved, and we developed new relationships which will help us going forward."

Mr Hunter is the first to admit that he hasn't always got it right: "I came to Caetano from the plant industry, where sales people sold everything from earthmovers to cement mixers. I joined an industry where coach salesmen didn't want to sell buses.

"I just thought that our people should be salesmen first, and the product came second, and I was being told it wouldn't work. I forced the sales staff to do it, and it didn't work. I then got in some young sales guys from outside of the industry who didn't know they weren't supposed to sell buses. But it didn't work very well on used vehicles, in particular."

At Waterlooville, things have moved on from the early days when the issue was getting some vehicles through the factory. When Caetano took over the former UVG works, it inherited five part-built UVG Urbanstars and enough parts for 15 more: "I went to everyone to sell them, and the big bus groups and independents were very generous – maybe they were just keen to keep some competition in the single-deck marketplace.

"But pretty quickly we realised there were no common parts on Urbanstar – every piece of glass was different, for example. The lesson was pretty obvious – we couldn't carry on with it."

The genesis of the Alusuisse-based Nimbus – basically a 'flipped' Caetano Citidino - brought with it a new set of problems: "We then found ourselves competing with our main chassis supplier, Transbus. It has been a good product – we've built over 300 of them – but slow chassis delivery almost crippled us at one point."

Nimbus stays in the product range: "We're not looking for new customers for Nimbus, but we continue building for our existing customers such as Tellings Golden Miller. There are 25 in the programme for next year," he says. Waterlooville has latterly began buzzing again with 70 Mercedes Vitos for London Dial-a-Ride, and there's a project in the pipeline which is remaining hidden from view for the time being.

At Heather, too, the yard looks healthy, with used stock down to 41 vehicles, the workshop busy and new deliveries evident. Mr Hunter says the figures for the year have hit most targets, and targeting a lift in turnover.

In common with all the team at Caetano UK, Mr Hunter is really buoyant with the new structure: "It'll be a challenge but I'm really looking forward to 2006," he says, taking one last puff on his Dunhill before diving back into the office, no doubt to perform another mental juggling act.

Caetano in the UK

Management structure

Wayne Allen	Service and aftercare director for the company, covering both Heather and Waterlooville sites
Jonathan Highton	Finance director for Salvador Caetano in the UK
Richard Hunter	Group sales director, fleet sales, coach and bus
Russell Moon	Coach sales director, new and used
Ian Tubbs	Director and general manager, SCC production and special projects

PHOENIX OPERATOR'S BID THROWN OUT AT PUBLIC INQUIRY

Traffic Commissioner dismisses licence application as a 'sham'

ANDREW JAROSZ, CBW CORRESPONDENT

AFTER two hearings, North East Traffic Commissioner Brigadier Tom Macartney has rejected the application for an operating licence by two former drivers of Rush Travel as nothing more than a sham – a phoenix application for an operator that had already had its licence revoked twice in 2005.

The new application, from 'A Coach Company (NE) Ltd', based at Blezzard Business Park, Seaton Burn, Newcastle Upon Tyne, was for a standard national licence for five vehicles, with nominated Transport Manager Steven Hyson, who was also one of the company's directors.

This had been opposed by VOSA on the grounds that it was a phoenix application from a disgraced company. A public inquiry held on November 2 (*CBW*, November 10) to review the application was told by VOSA that the new company was operating from the same premises on the same work and using the same vehicles and drivers, and thus had not sufficiently distanced itself from the failed operator.

It was told that five school contracts for Newcastle City Council and private contracts for three schools in Ponteland that were previously carried out by Rush Travel Limited, were currently being carried out under the umbrella of A Coach Company (North East) Limited. This had occurred without any re-tendering, and the same vehicles and drivers are being used to honour these contracts.

Mr Hyson confirmed that he was seeking a licence for five vehicles. School contracts would be his basic 'bread and butter' work, with other work added on top as the additional income. Mr Hyson stated that he had no drivers himself at the moment, as the work was being sub-contracted out to a selection of operators as a consortium.

Mr Hyson did confirm that he had taken on the Rush Travel Limited business in almost every respect, which included Rush Travel Limited's telephone number, fax number, client base, garage equipment, office equipment and computers. The maintenance staff had been retained and Mr Hyson said that A Coach Company insisted on doing the maintenance for the buses, which were being used on the various contracts.

David Chant, representing A Coach, addressed the issue of finance, which he accepted was fairly sketchy. He undertook to forward evidence of trading with the banking account within seven days, as it was clear that A Coach Company was already trading substantially, and this was not evident from the financial documentation which had been submitted prior to the Public Inquiry.

At that stage, Brigadier Macartney reserved his decision pending further submissions, and financial information dated November 7, 2005 was submitted by A Coach Company. In his decision, the Traffic Commissioner said that the supplementary finances submitted, far from clarifying the original finances, raised more questions and apparent anomalies. "The demonstration of trading shows that there was a consortium of six operators; Kingsley Coaches Limited, 1st Choice Travel Limited, On a Roll, AA and H Travel Limited, Smith's Travel and KJS Travel Limited. These six operators between them have submitted invoices to A Coach Company for September and October 2005 for £49,590. None of these invoices

appear to have been paid and there is no traffic concerning these invoices through the bank account of A Coach Company."

"The work being carried out by A Coach Company is exactly the work which was previously carried out by Rush Travel Limited and includes five school contracts to Newcastle City Council, three private school contracts for schools in Ponteland and there are a number of trips involving football supporters. This last type of work was a problem area which involved substantial police evidence at previous Public Inquiries involving Rush Travel Limited."

The Public Inquiry was then reconvened on December 15, 2005, so that Mr Chant and A Coach Company could make submissions having seen the statement produced by Mr Nicholson, with the accompanying documents.

These documents contained a statement from a driver, Mr David Rennick, dated July 26, 2005 and it appeared to link A Coach Company to Rush Travel Limited. In particular, Mr Rennick states in his statement at paragraph 3 of page 1 that he had been tasked to carry out a journey from Wideopen to Leeds and return on July 23/24, 2005.

Other quotes itemised included

"I then received a telephone call on my mobile telephone on the morning of Sunday July 24. 2005 from John Rush asking what had happened……".

"He then sent me a text message confirming that I was dismissed."

"I have been asked to name the parties involved with this company and explain each of their roles. John Rush and Margaret Gray have been my employers during the time period that I have stated there in my statement."

"John Rush is responsible for the maintenance of the vehicles and also drives, he is currently in Prague with Steven Hyson on behalf of the company. He is mainly based on the ground floor of the operating centre at Brenkley Yard with the drivers and fitters when he is not driving one of the company's vehicles. "

"Margaret Gray is sister to John Rush and part of her responsibility is the payment of driver wages and expenses. Her desk is situated in an office on the first floor of the same building, on the same floor as Steven Hyson who currently allocates the work to the drivers. "As Steven Hyson is at present in Prague, Malcolm Stewart is currently allocating the work to the drivers. Both Steven Hyson and Malcolm Stewart have also been employed by Rush Travel Limited for a number of years."

"I have been asked about my knowledge of A Coach Company (North East) Limited which I have been informed is purported to be a consortium of coach operators. I was aware that Rush Travel Limited has an operator's licence for many years, until it was revoked in May 2005. I was also aware that shortly before the decision to revoke the licence was made that a number of coach operators had been approached by Rush Travel Limited and had subsequently agreed to the use of their operator license discs by Rush Travel Limited."

"These coach operators are Smiths of Amble, Claire Henderson, Kevin Swan and more recently AA and H Travel Limited. Until two or three weeks ago, Kevin Swan's discs were being used on Rush Travel Limited's vehicles, it now appears that these have been replaced by discs belonging to AA and H Travel Limited."

"I am aware that both Steven Hyson and Steven Morrison are both Directors of the Company A Coach Company (North East) Limited. I believe that Steven Morrison is a Director in name only and have not seen any involvement from him in that Company. He is an ex-driver of a company, Blakemoor Taxis, also previously owned by John Rush and family. He is also the boyfriend/partner of John Rush's sister in law."

"As a driver my wages are paid monthly into my bank account. The pay instruction is in the name of R T L Travel and Tourist Limited and has been since January 16, 2005. Prior to this date the instruction was in the name of Rush Travel Limited."

"Expenses have been paid on an ad-hoc basis, from petty cash at the discretion of Margaret Gray.

"It is clear that John Rush and Margaret Gray make all the decisions as I have witnessed throughout my employment with their company and continue to do so.

"I was informed by them that in the event of being the subject of a check by the enforcement agencies that I was to state that my employer was whoever's disc was being displayed on the vehicle that I was driving at the time. I know this was to prevent the enforcement agencies from discovering that Rush Travel Limited were still operating as they had done in the past despite the revocation of their operator's licence".

'If it looks like a duck, waddles like a duck and quacks like a duck – it probably is a duck'

Traffic Commissioner Tom Macartney

Signed by David Rennick on 26 July 2005."

In response Mr Hyson gave supplementary evidence to the incident involving Mr Rennick on July 23 and 24when he was in Czechoslovakia driving a coach with Mr John Rush. He said that Mr Rennick had been employed by RTL Travel and Tours which was identical to Rush Travel in ownership as it shared the same co-directors of Rush and Mrs Gray. The job in Czechoslovakia was being carried out on behalf of AA and H Travel.

Mr Hyson stated that Mr Rush and Mrs Gray still managed RTL Travel and Tours, but they did not manage A Coach Company. He described the arrangement by which drivers were employed by RTL Travel and Tours, as a kind of Agency for Drivers. The coaches were owned by RTL, and the drivers were hired to any operator using RTL Travel and Tours coaches. Drivers were then tasked to carry out work sub-contracted to these operators by A Coach Company.

In response to a number of questions, Mr Hyson eventually agreed that there was little sign of money being paid by A Coach Company to the six 'O' licence holders who were sub-contractors for various work, most of which were for regular school contracts. A Coach Company appeared to have debts of £50,000 for invoices submitted by these six companies but there was no evidence of any of this money passing through A Coach Company's accounts. Mr Hyson confirmed he had not made any. He stated that there had been some cash payments, but when questioned on the detail was unable to identify a single transaction on several months' bank statements, which would indicate payment of any of his sub-contractors.

Brigadier Macartney said that there was some considerable discussion with Mr Hyson about his methods of operation. "It was patently obvious that he was either dissembling, or his business affairs were in such a muddle that the firm it was likely to fail disastrously before the licence application was successful. Mr Hyson agreed that there was a need for an immediate improvement. He was unable to give me details of the current financial state of the firm reconciling debtors and creditors, nor was he able to give me details of a plan of action, which would allow the firm to reach a level of efficiency which would be expected of any new applicant for an operator's licence."

In delivering his verdict the Traffic Commissioner said that the critical issue was whether A Coach Company was a phoenix application for Rush Travel Limited.

"There has been extensive evidence from the Vehicle Examiner, Mr Nicholson. There has been admission by the operator, and his representative, that there is substantial similarity. There is open agreement by the solicitor on behalf of the operator that many people, including those in the PSV industry, confuse A Coach Company with Rush Travel Limited. There are the many similarities of contracts for council work on school runs, private contracts on school runs, and the carriage of football supporters.

"There are the same premises with all the same facilities and staff, the same operating centre, the same maintenance staff, the same telephone number, the same fax number, the same vehicles in some cases with the old Rush Travel Limited lettering removed, but the outline still showing through and apparent to the casual observer.

"It has been said by another Traffic Commissioner at another Public Inquiry "If it looks like a duck, waddles like a duck and quacks like a duck – it probably is a duck." In this case there are many, many similarities between the two entities. I find that A Coach Company is a phoenix application and is acting as a front for Rush Travel Limited. I come to this conclusion based on all the links, my reading of the documentary evidence and my assessment of those witnesses giving evidence before me at the Public Inquiry, which includes their body language."

"I now make my decision, including the statement by Mr Rennick. This is a particularly damning statement as it makes it plain that Mr John Rush and his sister Margaret Gray are both closely involved in the running of Rush Travel Limited under the guise of A Coach Company. This was readily apparent in July 2005, although the licence for Rush Travel Limited was revoked on 27 May 2005. It is also alleged in the same statement that Linda Bullen did not have anything to do with the business and has lived in the Isle of Wight for the last six or seven years approximately. This additional statement makes it very plain that the application for a new licence by A Coach Company is a phoenix on behalf of Rush Travel Limited. To portray A Coach Company as a separate and new entity is a sham, deliberately intended to deceive a Traffic Commissioner during the application for a new licence."

> 'To portray A Coach Company as a separate and new entity is a sham deliberately intended to deceive a Traffic Commissioner'
>
> Traffic Commissioner Tom Macartney

"In the case of A Coach Company my findings are that this application is a sham, a phoenix, and the various measures put forward to camouflage and obfuscate the true nature of the business were deliberate deceit in an attempt to obtain a licence. In such a serious case, there can be no reasonable conclusion other than that the operator, and those involved in this deception, are unfit to hold an operator's licence. Their good repute is simply inadequate for entry into a professional industry in which high standards are required.

"I find as a fact that Mr Steven Hyson has made a deliberate effort to conceal the true facts from me and obfuscate the way in which A Coach Company was attempting to continue the operation of Rush Travel Limited. I find it to be proportionate and appropriate to conclude that Mr Steven Hyson is not fit to hold an operator's licence, nor does he have the necessary good repute to be involved in an operator's licence, even although this may affect his ambition to pursue a career as a PSV operator and transport manager."

HOLLINS HAS LICENCE REVOKED

AFTER two bruising hearings (*CBW* August 4 and November 3), Hollins Travel of Bury and its proprietor Craig Jones ended up with the worst possible decision, in a written decision from North West traffic commissioner Beverley Bell.

Mrs Bell revoked the licence for Craig Jones trading as Hollins Travel from January 15, and refused to grant a new licence to Gracedown Ltd trading as Hollins Travel.

Mr Jones had been called in for a number of unsatisfactory maintenance investigations, although in the eight years of trading he had only collected two immediate and one delayed prohibition. He demonstrated he had arranged satisfactory maintenance with a bona fide garage, and records were being kept in order.

However, during the course of proceedings many other matters came to light. He had not informed the traffic commissioner that he'd received a tachograph conviction, he'd formed a limited company in April 2004 without applying for a new licence, and he'd employed a transport manager (in name only) who had a full time job driving for another bus company. There was also a question over the dates when he had changed transport manager, and the first hearing was adjourned when an apparent conflict of evidence arose.

Mr Jones returned to the reconvened hearing with a new proposed transport manager, new tachograph checking arrangements, and offered to surrender his licence in lieu of receiving one for the limited entity. But during the course of proceedings, it emerged another coach had missed its six-weekly check.

Mrs Bell said the operator had breached undertakings over roadworthy vehicles, attracted several prohibitions, failed to provide evidence of safety inspections, had four unsatisfactory maintenance investigations, and failed to respond adequately to warning letters. She said he hadn't implemented a driver defect reporting system, hadn't responded adequately to four unsatisfactory maintenance investigations, failed to observe tachograph regulations, and failed to notify the change in entity. She said she had already indicated that that licence should come to an end.

She was also critical of a transport manager who was paid cash in hand, could not discipline drivers, and who failed to notice the change in entity, and equally critical of an operator who did not make taxation arrangements.

Regarding a new licence, in the name of the limited company, with Mr Jones as CPC holder, Mrs Bell said that she had to take into account Mr Jones' past conduct when assessing his future.

"I must take into account serious breaches which have jeopardised road safety, that the operator has not shown the maturity and understanding to properly deal with the obligations, and that his assurances cannot be relied upon.

"Whilst I do not find Craig Jones to be a deliberately dishonest witness, I do find him to be naive, cavalier and overly reliant upon others when seeking to establish competence."

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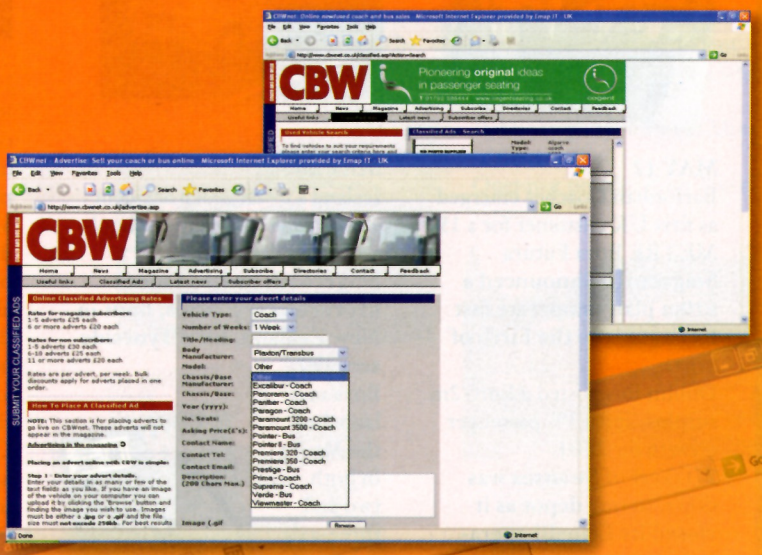

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REVIEW – PART TWO

CONTINUING the week-by-week summary of major news stories of 2005, shows that consolidation and re-organisation continues in the coach and bus industry.

On the operator front, 2 Travel of Swansea, finally ended up in receivership, and Supreme of Benfleet went into administration. The groups continued their onward march, with Go-Ahead buying Southern Vectis and Solent Blue Line, Stagecoach buying Glenvale, Arriva taking over Blue Bus and National Express buying Telling Golden Miller's London operations. Smaller takeovers included Dunn Line taking over MASS operations in Lincoln, and D&G taking over Choice Travel in the West Midlands. The municipal sale of Bournemouth's buses was mishandled and had to be re-run, and the sale of Blackburn transport was also mooted.

Despite Neoplan planning to close its factory in Stuttgart, the British manufacturing industry continued to remain optimistic. New models from ADL and Plaxton promised much, and the continued flood of new coach types from overseas only served to spoil operators for choice.

The following is a the second part of the summary and index of the major news stories, and features as reported by *CBW*.

MAY

MAY 5

Northern Ireland operator Translink ordered 350 new buses with the aid of a £48.4m Government investment.

East Lancashire Coachbuilders' management bought a controlling share in its business from Dawson Williams.

Volvo launched integral Polish-built 9700 Prestige Plus coach, aimed at the top end of the market.

Dunn Line bought MASS transit operations in Lincoln, as D&G of Longton purchased Choice of Wednesfield.

Public Inquiry: Reliance (Alec Head).

Vehicle profile: Vauxhall Vivaro 2900

MAY 12

Barfordian Coaches emerged as first UK customer for a 15 METRE Bova Futura

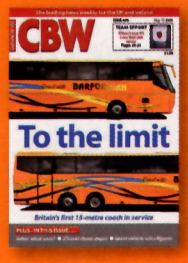
Stagecoach announced a £10m plan to operate fast ferries across the Firth of Forth

Dublin Bus posted a Euro 2m surplus, and a 3% passenger growth for 2004.

2 Travel of Swansea was down to one depot as it closed its Llanelli operations.

Public Inquiry: Style Travel of Mold.

Operator profile: Ellison's Coaches



MAY 19

2 Travel slithered towards receivership, as more contracts are lost and drivers sacked.

Anderson travel Group launched a new subsidiary London Mini Coaches based at Heathrow.

First ordered 24 accessible Plaxton coaches, as Ceredigion Council ordered 12 Optare Tempos.

First posted record operating profits, but the UK bus division profits were down, as were margins.

Interview: Traffic Commissioner Joan Aitken.

Review: Album Conference

MAY 26

Ireland's worst coach accident since 1988 claimed five schoolchildren's lives.

Stagecoach ordered nine hybrid electric buses, built in New Zealand, for a Tyneside service.

Bova relaunched the Magiq in both two and three-axle versions for the UK.

Staffordshire operators said that they were losing work to the County's own yellow buses.

Public Inquiry: TM Travel.

Vehicle profile: Plaxton Centro

JUNE

JUNE 2

Tellings Golden Miller sold its London buses operation to National Express Group for £20.4m.

Ireland's National Parents Council called for a boycott of all vehicles without seatbelts, in wake of death crash.

Go-Ahead Group posted a bid for the Southern Vectis Group, which included the Solent Blue Line operation in Hampshire.

ADL launched an Enviro 300 yellow bus version codenamed 'sChOOL BUS'.

Public Inquiry: Clayton Jones group.

Vehicle profile: Bova Magiq

JUNE 9

Rear lounges on conference coaches would require lap belts under new EU seat belt regulations.

Volvo launched new Euro 4 diesel engines, promising better mpg and higher reliability.

Bus crime analysis showed that partnerships with authorities and CCTV were useful tools in the ongoing fight.

Courtney Coaches claimed a 20% saving in fuel costs by using rapeseed oil fuel.

Public Inquiry: AA Travel of Whitehaven.

Vehicle profile: King Long Coach

JUNE 16

A new transportation blueprint for coaching in York is launched on the eve of Royal Ascot racing taking place there.

2 travel's collapse could result in a ban on its directors said Traffic Commissioner David Dixon.

Code of Practice was issued by the Disability Rights Commission, in respect of bus and coach operators.

ADL introduced its new Enviro 400 double decker, with a new chassis.

Public Inquiry: Wilby's Coaches.

Operator profile: WA Shearings

JUNE 23

'Ascot at York' was hailed as a coaching success, by most participating coach operators.

The Wright Streetcar made its first public appearance, and is viewed by the Duke of York, in the city.

National Express won contract to provide 80 press coaches for the G8 summit, as Stagecoach promised to lay on subsidised coaches for protesters.

London's Dial-A-Ride were reorganised as 32 Mercedes Vitos were introduced.

Public Inquiry: CS Travel of Lincoln.

Technology Profile: Almex

JUNE 30

Sutton Educational Trust called for Yellow Buses to be adopted as a national standard.

National Express unveiled a plan to spend £2.5m on upgrading its Heathrow Airport Coach and Bus station.

Neoplan reorganised production of buses and coaches at its European plants.

Stagecoach Group full-year results showed turnaround through growth.

Public Inquiry: Wigan Buses.

Technology Profile: S&G Coachworks

JULY

JULY 7
Transport for London called for more disabled people to use its accessible bus services.
Mandatory introduction of digital tachographs was postponed for six months by EU.
Consultant's report claimed that deregulation would not work in Ireland.
Excellent Connections complained that its application to run flexible bus services in Scotland was being deliberately delayed.
Public Inquiry: JRT of Huddersfield.
Vehicle profile: Mercedes-Benz minibuses

JULY 14
Stagecoach driver at the centre of the London bus bombings, was praised for his bravery.
Passenger Transport Executives stepped up the pressure on the Government to introduce franchising.
The Kings Ferry landed the prestige job of transporting dignitaries at the 60th VE Day celebrations in London.
Eyesight requirements for PSV drivers were explained.
Public Inquiry: Liberton Travel of Loanhead.
Vehicle profile: Rohill UK

JULY 21
Transdev won the first round of bidding to buy Bournemouth's Yellow Buses.
Stagecoach purchased Liverpool operator Glenvale, and Arriva snapped up Blue Bus of Bolton - both were loss makers.
Sukwant Thandi Buses of Smethwick, had its licence reduced after employing disqualified drivers.
Manchester guided busway approved, but Cambridgeshire proposals were still in abeyance
Public Inquiry: First in Bristol.
Technical profile: Bradtech

JULY 28
Stagecoach North East brought in electric hybrid buses, just in time for the Tall Ships Races.
First in Bristol was punished by a licence cut, unless it improved its maintenance by November.
Central parking Systems decided to keep its Centra bus and coach operation, but to sell Flights Hallmark.
Birmingham and Merseyside councils accused of not backing bus priorities.
Public Inquiry: Arriva North West.
Vehicle profile: Optare Solera

AUGUST

AUGUST 4
Irish Government prepared to scrap the 3 for 2 rule and mandate seat belts on all its school buses
Bob Coombes led an £11.8m management buyout of Optare from its parent company NABI.
Coach operators threatened to boycott Keswick unless more parking is provided.
Lothian Buses faced an indefinite strike, as pay disputes flared up all over the country.
Public Inquiry: Hollins Travel.
Review: EU Driver Training Directive

AUGUST 11
Bournemouth Council was ordered to restart the sale process of its bus company.
National Express plumped for Caetano accessible coaches, using a 'Magic Floor' lift.
South Yorkshire Motors of Pontefract was restarted, as Supreme of Benfleet went into administration.
Dodds of Troon purchased coach tour operator North British Tours.
Public Inquiry: PNP Coaches of Ripon.
Vehicle profile: TVAC Coachbuilders

AUGUST 18
Stagecoach promised to invest £6.5m in vehicles for Glenvale, as First launched the first of its accessible coaches in Devon.
CPT's Coach Marque scheme continued to grow its membership.
Radio 4 programme blasted the UK bus industry, with FirstGroup picking up most brickbats.
Age discrimination rules on recruitment were explained.
Public Inquiry: American Dream Cars of Leicester.
Operator profile: John Flanagan Coach Travel

AUGUST 25
Excelsior Coaches of Bournemouth promised to bid for Yellow Buses when bidding was reopened.
Blackburn Council started investigations into selling off 90% of its bus company.
FirstGroup installed a new computer controlled maintenance system at six major depots.
£2.5m Quality Initiative along Calder valley fails on its first day, when a tanker accident closes the only road for a whole day.
Public Inquiry: Express Motors of Caernarfon.
Operator profile: Ross Travel Group

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IRRATIONAL ARCHER IS 'OUT OF TOUCH'

From: Geoff Newton, chief executive, Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (UK)

THE comments made by Archer (*CBW*, Dec 15) about CILT(UK) cannot be allowed to go unchallenged. It is unfortunate and understandable that he is still clearly aggrieved by his experiences, but his remarks went too far and show he is out of touch with the present day Institute.

Organisations have to adapt to changing circumstances and CILT(UK) is no exception. Archer's comments come at a time when we are about to launch initiatives designed to reinforce and increase our relevance in today's fast-changing environment. This includes extensive re-engagement with employers. It is also worth pointing out that all professional institutions (and trade organisations) experience fluctuations in membership numbers for various reasons at various times.

The remarks about qualifications fail to acknowledge changes in the field of education and training. Nowadays, there tend to be fewer exams because of an increased emphasis on simultaneous development of theory and practical application.

A youthful Archer at university in 2006 would be very unlikely (and unlucky) to have to sit 32 examinations.

Far from being "Mickey Mouse qualifications", all CILT qualifications are government accredited and audited and all have one or more elements which are examined or externally assessed.

The various levels of membership we offer are also directly geared to an individual's experience as well as qualifications and there is a consistent and rigorous assessment process. Archer may regard this as "ridiculous", but it is in line with other professional institutions.

We always value the contributions of our members – whether employed or otherwise – and offer a reduced subscription rate for retired and unemployed members. Also, recognising the current employment situation, we have a dedicated careers service to assist unemployed members or those simply looking for a change.

Archer's last point is highly irrational. Surely when recruiting you want the best people, so why place artificial restrictions on candidates, purely because of a professional affiliation?

I cannot comment on the incidents or individuals alluded to in Archer's article, but it is a huge shame that he appears to have carried a grudge since.

One thing is certain, none of us make progress if we keep looking back with regret, rather than forward with optimism.

COACHES CAN USE BUS LANES

From: Bob Pilbeam, coaching consultant, CPT

Bob Pilbeam

I MUST point out that your reporter has made an important error when reporting on the London Coach Concordat in *CBW*, December 15.

In the report it is suggested that coach operators agree to not use bus lanes in the capital. This is incorrect. The only reference to bus lanes in the Concordat where it refers to bus lanes is in item 1.4 where coaches entering the City of London traffic zones must not use the bus lanes, but this does not apply generally. For your readers' information the majority of bus lanes in the capital can be used by coaches which, after all, are registered as buses. The exemptions to this rule are if either the words "LOCAL" or "TfL" are displayed alongside the bus symbol.

CPT actively campaigns for coaches to be able to use bus lanes and is happy to hear from members of locations where this is not the case and they feel it should be.

THERE'S NOTHING NEW ABOUT LIVING IN A BUS...

From R Marshall, Burnley, Lancashire

RE 'Quite literally moving house', Diary, *CBW*, December 15: whilst converting buses into mobile homes may have started with New Age Travellers, their use as homes dates back to the 1930s.

Then railway coaches and buses were in use for permanent living, or weekend and holiday use.

All this ended with Town and County Act legislation.

Double deckers were converted into living accommodation for drivers recruited outside of the area by City of Oxford Motor Services in the early post-war period: local drivers being lost to the motor industry, then growing rapidly.

OPERATOR: TRANSLINK

TRANSLINK has taken delivery of a very mixed bag of 61 Optare Solos for use on service bus routes in Northern Ireland.

It was not just the varying lengths (8.5m and 9.2m) and seating capacities (26-33 seats) that made the order so complicated – or the fact that some of the vehicles were fitted with tracking to provide easy access wheelchair spaces – Translink's requirements called for precise delivery timings too. The last vehicle was handed over on time at the end of last year at a high-profile ceremony at Stormont.

"All orders require our processes to be flexible and customer responsive, but the Translink business was particularly complex and comes from a strong customer relationship developed over several years," says Optare sales director Chris Wise, who attended the handover with Bob Coombes, Optare managing director, Paul Slaney and James Erwin from Translink, and Jeff Hughes from Optare.

"As it was," Wise continued, "We have been able to meet all their requirements in the relevant timescale – demonstrating once again our ability to meet differing customer needs."

All the vehicles use the same engine, the 136bhp Mercedes-Benz unit.

FACT FILE

Chassis/ body:	**Optare Solo**
Engine:	**Mercedes-Benz 136bhp**
Transmission:	**automatic**
Seats:	**26-33**
Spec:	**Tracking for easy seat removal**
Bought from:	**Optare**

OPERATOR: STAGECOACH

THE first Wrightbus Eclipse Commuter interurban express coaches have been delivered to Stagecoach in Scotland.

As a conventional high-floor coach, the Eclipse Commuter's USP is its roll-on disabled access – wheelchairs have a dedicated space next to the wide opening door, and access the vehicle via a standard fold out ramp. In addition, the Commuter has a large luggage capacity with underfloor lockers and securing straps for carrying bicycles, an often requested – but up until now unavailable – service.

"This is precisely the type of operation we had in mind when we developed the Eclipse Commuter," says Sam McLaren, Wrightbus commercial director. "It is a service which carries people for relatively long distances, where the comfort and capacity of a high-floor vehicle is important, and where there needs to be space for luggage."

FACT FILE

Chassis/ body:	**Volvo B7RLE/ Wrightbus Eclipse Commuter**
Engine:	**Volvo 7.3 litre**
Transmission:	**automatic**
Seats:	**51**
Spec:	**high-backed seats, tinted double glazing, CCTV**
Bought from:	**Wrightbus**

Operated in conjunction with Dumfries and Galloway Council, the two vehicles will run on the 75 mile 500 service linking Stranraer and Dumfries. The route was overhauled two years ago with increased frequency, faster journey times and refurbished single-deckers – passenger numbers doubled in twelve months hence the decision to upgrade the vehicles.

OPERATOR: AIRPARKS SERVICES

AIRPARKS Services have invested nearly £1m in six brand new MCV Evolution buses. The vehicles have been specially adapted to suit their role as airline passenger and luggage mules, and will be operating at the off-site parking facilities at Luton and Manchester airports.

"Each vehicle has been developed with close co-operation between our customer and our engineers to incorporate Airparks innovative ideas which will provide them with major operational benefits," says Vernon Edwards, MCV Bus and Coach commercial director.

Luggage is kept safe and secure using safety curtains – designed by Airpark's transport manager David Rowe. Passengers are kept safe, secure and comfortable with a new Mikuni heating system from Clayton and the latest Rowan Telmac seats with integral headrests and three point belts keeps passengers comfortable.

Real-time information is displayed internally via a flat-screen LCD monitor.

FACT FILE

Chassis/ body:	**MAN 14.220 4X2 SLF City Bus Chassis fitted with MCV Evolution body**
Engine:	**MAN Euro 3**
Transmission:	**Voith 4 Speed with Integral Retarder**
Seats:	**Rowan Telmac Telford 40 seats with three point retractable seat belts**
Spec:	**Manual Compak Bookleaf Ramp, extended Luggage storage on both near side and off side, Ski storage area, Blaupunkt PA System, Hanover Audio Visual Display with TFT Internal Screens, Illuminated destination boards, DDA Compliant**
Bought from:	**MCV Evolution**

OPERATOR: ST MARGARETS

ST MARGARETS Travel of Stansted Abbotts, Ware, is maintaining its low fleet age profile with the delivery of a new Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 413Cdi from Esker Bus & Coach (UK).

Established in 1993 with a single 16-seat Ford Transit by Terry Oates and Roy Haywood, St Margarets operates seven Mercedes–based vehicles ranging from 16-35 seats – all under two years old. The company has a well established client base, including two leading supermarket chains, and also specialises in UK and continental golf tours.

Converted by KVC, the new Sprinter features an extended body with a large coach-style rear panel and luggage area accessed by rear doors, a modified two-stage entrance step, ducted saloon heating, forced air ventilation, bonded and tinted panoramic windows, pleated curtains, 16 high-backed coach seats with three-point belts, studded centre-aisle carpet, wood effect dashboard and luggage rack edge trim, individual passenger sets, in-dash air conditioning, reverse warning bleeper and a DVD system with LCD monitor.

Terry Oates said: "We are a family run company and pride ourselves on the high level of customer care we provide in offering a first class service to all. Most of our work is repeat business or by word of mouth recommendation from existing clients."

Roy Haywood added: "It is extremely important for a business of our size to establish close working relationships with our suppliers. With Esker you can deal on a personal level which gives peace of mind and access to the right people when we need them."

FACT FILE

Chassis/ body:	**Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 413Cdi**
Seats:	**16**
Spec:	**Bonded and tinted panoramic windows, pleated curtains, wood effect dashboard and luggage rack edge trim, individual passenger sets, reverse warning bleeper, DVD system with LCD monitor**
Bought from:	**Esker bus & Coach (UK)**

OPERATOR: COATHAM MINICOACHES

JOINING Coatham Minicoaches recently was this 29-seat Optare Nouvelle – following closely on the heels of a 39-seat Solera and taking the number of Optare's in the ten-vehicle fleet to five.

Owner Mike Hodgson said: "We are very satisfied with the coach products available through Optare. This new Nouvelle is a well made vehicle with full luxury specification including air conditioning, TV abd DVD system plus reclining seats. In addition to using it on local private hire work we'll use it on our own UK holiday programme, especially where passenger numbers require a smaller vehicle but customers still expect the comforts of a full-sized touring coach."

Coatham's Nouvelle is equipped with Fainsa Gaudi seating mounted on tracking, full length parcel racks incorporating individual passenger sets, full soft interior trim and moquette centre roof panel.

Based on the Mercedes-Benz Vario 814D, the vehicle is powered by a 136bhp OM904LA engine and weighs under 7.5 tonnes – allowing it to use the third lane on motorways. The Nouvelle body is built using an all-welded steel box section frame with anticorrosion coating and wax injection for longevity.

FACT FILE

Chassis/ body:	**Mercedes-Benz Vario 814D**
Engine:	**136bhp OM904LA**
Seats:	**29**
Spec:	**Fainsa Gaudi seatin, parcel racks, full soft interior trim, moquette centre roof panel**

OPERATOR: EAST YORKSHIRE MOTOR SERVICES

EAST Yorkshire Motor Services has taken delivery of its largest ever intake of new coaches with nine Volvo B12B Plaxtons – a mixture of Panther and Paragon models.

The new coaches are being distributed around the EYMS Group's operating subsidiaries with Whittles taking four, East Yorkshire Coaches three and Finglands the remaining pair.

Chairman peter Shipp commented: "The new vehicles mark a significant upgrade to our coach operations. I have always been pleased with Plaxton quality and was very impressed when I saw them nearing completion on the production line at Scarborough."

All nine coaches feature air conditioning and eight are configured with 49-53 seat layouts.

One has been supplied with 57 seats and is among those delivered to Whittles. Eight were also supplied with Volvo's I-Shift gearboxes and one was fitted with a ZF automatic.

EYMS says it has been very happy with the I-Shift system from experience already gained in operation with an initial example.

FACT FILE

Chassis/ body:	**Volvo B12B Plaxton Panther/Paragon**
Transmission:	**Volvo's I-Shift/ZF automatic**
Seats:	**49/53**

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RESCROFT BUILDS ON RELATIONSHIP WITH O&H

OUGHTRED & Harrison (Facilities) Ltd of Goole, East Yorkshire, has strengthened its association with seating specialist Rescroft by taking Embus tested safety flooring and Defender III seats for its Renault Master M1 crew cab conversions for Sunwin Motor Group of Yorkshire.

Sunwin specified a Renault Master panel van conversion with increased safe seating capacity, from three to eight, provision of a sliding door and fixed windows to the main seating area, a table and panel-mounted washing facilities, as well as a fully functioning cargo handling area.

The extended cab area was panelled off from the cargo area and the Rescroft Embus floor fixing system installed. The five seats were fixed – Rescroft's forward facing M1 Defender III double unit and a rear facing treble unit with an M1 compliant Defender III Tip-up for easy access. The central table was also fixed via the Embus system.

Rescroft's Embus provides installers and operators with certified seat belt anchorages fully compliant with current and predicted future legislation.

The Defender III seats are trimmed in Ambla washable vinyl and each has a lap/diagonal height adjustable belt featuring the Weblocker mechanism which restricts webbing feed in the event of an accident.

● For more information about Rescroft products, call 01527 521300 or visit *www.rescroft.com*

Above: Oughtred & Harrison Renault Master Rescroft crew cab conversion

Left: Renault Master O&H crew cab conversion with Rescroft Embus floor fixing system and Defender III seating

WEB-BASED FUEL MONITORING LAUNCHED

SCALA Consulting is launching 'Essacta' a new web-based fuel monitoring and benchmarking software system to assist operators in precisely measuring the amount of fuel being used by vehicle and driver.

Key features are: the system's ability to provide data fuel consumption and cost by individual vehicle; comparison within the company between different depots, vehicle types, drivers and type of work; and 'live' benchmarking comparisons with other companies.

The system is accessed online so there are no equipment or installation costs. Customers pay a small fee based on the amount of fuel consumed.

SCALA claims even without the visibility and management benefits a saving of two litres per driver per week will pay for the system.

Essacta has direct links with major fuel card companies and can access data on transactions automatically.

On-site fuel recording can be interfaced with this information and it allows managers to minimise fuel consumption in terms of litres per kilometre, cost per litre or by vehicle utilisation. The SCALA system can be trialled free until January 2006.

● Contact John Perry on 01484 422084.

TAKEOVER SPARKS GROWTH FOR PRIMA

CLOTHING specialist Prima, the London Docklands-based enterprise taken over by Alexandra plc in April, has announced encouraging year-end figures.

In the year ended 30 September, 2005, Prima increased its sales by 9.6% and achieved a turnover of almost £7m. MD Nick Atkinson believes the upturn is due to the new association with Alexandra. He said: "Our clients are already enjoying the benefits of an increased and extensive range of stock supported garments covering corporate wear, leisure wear, work and foot wear – and this is reflected in the increased sales and wider market share."

Prima has been established almost 30 years. The company says growth is related to its customer service record – which is recognised as adhering to the highest standards – not just for product quality but through excellence in the ordering, packaging, delivery and aftercare services.

NEW WEBSITE FOR PREMIER PITS

PREMIER Pits, manufacturer of pre-fabricated, modular vehicle inspection pits, has launched a new website.

MD Mel Burrell said: "Premier Pits has grown rapidly over the past few years and we continue to expand our ideas across a whole range of pits."

The company's latest features include galvanised washdown pits, fully compliant health and safety accessories and a range of Premier safety lights. All details are fully explained on the website and there is also an interactive pit model allowing browsers to add accessories to a pit – giving them an idea as to how they work and where to position them.

● Visit *www.premierpits.com* or call Laura Burrell on 01775 821222 for more information.

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1988 Volvo 83 Seats, Alexander, Belts
1982 Leyland Titan 76 Seats, Gardener Eng
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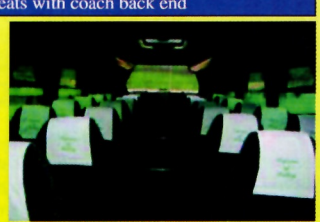

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BIG	3018	FEZ	7684	HNZ	7812	OUI	9134	PKZ	3821	RLZ	1217
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Are you the Management Team we're looking for?

Buckinghamshire's Transportation service has recently undergone a major organisational review and we are now seeking to fill two key posts within the Transport & Accessibility In House Accessible Transport Service known as Swan Rider. This is a readvertisement. Previous applicants need not apply.

Swan Rider Team Leader

£31,743 - £35,307 p.a.

Aylesbury

Ref PT236a/CBW

As Team Leader Swan Rider you will be instrumental in the setting up of the new In House Accessible Transport Service, and then be responsible for its operation! Think you're up to the job? You will ultimately be responsible for the day to day running of the service, its staff, budgets and vehicles, as well as helping to formulate the policies and working practices to make this operation a professional integrated service. Your customers will include the Childrens' & Social Care Portfolios; schools; colleges; social care centres for adults and young people; the voluntary sector and the general public operating in the main under S19 (Small Bus) Permits. Reporting to our Specialist Transport Group Manager, you will play a pivotal role in the development of a new integrated accessible passenger service for people with specialist transport needs, which we hope will extend the reach of our accessible minibus operations to include public transport and transport services in the community, as well as transport for our own clients.

To succeed in this role you will need to be able to demonstrate strong organisational and inter-personal skills, and will have direct management experience, hopefully but not necessarily exclusively in passenger fleet management or passenger transport operations, and preferably in a setting that involved transport for disabled people, or those with specialist transport needs.

Senior Transport Officer

£27,756 - £30,891 p.a.

Aylesbury

Ref PT237a/CBW

As our Senior Transport Officer Swan Rider, your challenge will be to assist the Team Leader to help set up the new In House Accessible Transport Service and then be responsible for the day to day allocation of the vehicles, staff and passengers onto routes. You will also be the first point of contact from the referral unit who receive requests for transport from the Childrens' and Social Care portfolios requiring transport for older people, adults with learning difficulties and with physical disabilities, colleges, schools and the voluntary sector.

You will line manage up to 4 area supervisors who in turn supervise the drivers and passenger assistants on the front line.

To succeed in this role you will need to be experienced in resource allocation, preferably in a transport setting, have good people management skills and the ability to keep cool in a fast-moving environment.

For an informal discussion on either of these posts, please contact Gordon McKendry on 01296 382403/07793 666365 or John Hodgkins on 01296 383732.

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EVENTS DIARY

2006

January 14:
Excursions 2006 tourism exhibition, Alexandra Palace, North London. *www.excursions.org.uk*

January 26:
School Transport 06 Conference, Barbican Centre, London. Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers, with *CBW* media partnership. Details on 0207 324 4330, *www.neilstewartassociates.com/st125* or fax 0207 490 8830.

January 26:
CPT Annual Dinner, Hilton Hotel, Park Lane, London. Clare Kehoe on 020 7240 3131, e-mail *clarek@cpt-uk.org*

February 13-17:
CPT Scotland Portugal Study Tour. Gail Hume 0131 272 2150, email: *gailhume@cpt-uk.freeserve.co.uk*

February 28:
Reducing Crime on Public Transport Conference, Earls Court One, London. *CBW* media partner. Contact 020 7324 4330, *www.neilstewartassociates.com/li226* for registration, or fax 0207 490 8830

March 1-2:
British Travel Trade Fair, NEC Birmingham.

March 8-9:
Moving On Conference, Crown Plaza Hotel, Glasgow, *www.moving-on-conference.co.uk*, or tel: 0191 241 4523 *www.britishtraveltradefair.com*

March 14-16:
International Road Transport Union 30th World Congress, Dubai World Trade Centre. *www.iru.org*

April 4:
London Transport Awards Dinner, London Hilton. 01224 263134

April 7-9:
Coach Tourism Council/ Bonded Coach Holidays Conference 2006, Llandudno, North Wales. 01227 762200 or email *david.smith@coachtourismcouncil.com*

April 22/23:
UK Coach Rally, Brighton

April 24-26:
CPT Scotland Annual Conference, Gleneagles. Gail Hume 0131 272 2150, email: *gailhume@cpt-uk.freeserve.co.uk*

April 25/27:
CV Show, NEC, Birmingham

May 8/10:
ALBUM Conference, Cardiff. Details: Karen Stafford-Smith 029 2078 7700.

May 21-28:
CPT Study Tour 2006, Singapore/ Kuala Lumpur. Details on 0207 240 3131

October 10-13:
CTA Event, G-Mex, Manchester. *www.communitytransport.com,* or call 0870 774 3586

November 7-9:
Euro Bus Expo, NEC. 0870 224 8619, *eurobusxpo@expom.co.uk*

November 24-25:
Coach and Bus Show 2006, RDS, Dublin. Contact *www.cttc.ie, c.collins.cttc@ioi.ie*

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Transport Co-ordinator,
Odense Municipality, Denmark

Speakers include:

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Travelling to School Project,
Department for Transport

Penny Jones, Chair,
Travelling to School Project,
Department for Education and Skills

Tim Davies, Immediate Past Chairman,
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Catherine Rawas,
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KATRINA TOUR GIVES NEW ORLEANS THE BLUES

THE remaining people in New Orleans have really got the blues about a new tourism initiative.

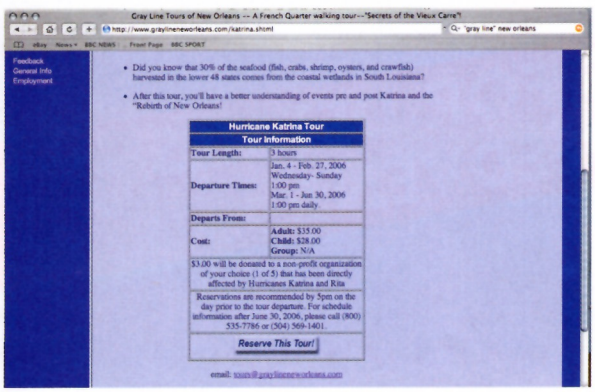
Coach operator Gray Line is running tours around the once-flooded city to show other Americans the damage caused by the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and that's what's got people's backs up.

"It's a catastrophe that happened here, and I just think that people need to be a little more considerate," said one resident from the flooded Ninth Ward in New Orleans.

But Gray Line, which has a base in New Orleans, is unrepentant, claiming that the tours will awake America to the problems and the failure of Government to deal with it.

"People around the country don't understand it until they see it first hand," said manager Gary Hoffman, whose own home was ruined by the disaster. "We're going to walk them through what we, the locals, experienced leading up to and following the hurricane."

Three hours on a Gray Line tour costs around £20, and passengers have to stay aboard the coaches. Gray Line donates $3 of each ticket to one of five disaster charities.


Gray Line Tours of New Orleans -- A French Quarter walking tour--"Secrets of the Vieux Carre"!
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"gray line" new orleans
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Employment
Did you know that 30% of the seafood (fish, crabs, shrimp, oysters, and crawfish) harvested in the lower 48 states comes from the coastal wetlands in South Louisiana?
After this tour, you'll have a better understanding of events pre and post Katrina and the "Rebirth of New Orleans!
Hurricane Katrina Tour
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Tour Length: 3 hours
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Departs From:
Cost: Adult: $35.00 Child: $28.00 Groups: N/A
$3.00 will be donated to a non-profit organization of your choice (1 of 5) that has been directly affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita
Reservations are recommended by 5pm on the day prior to the tour departure. For schedule information after June 30, 2006, please call (800) 535-7786 or (504) 569-1401.
Reserve This Tour!
email:

The Gray Line website, which offers the Katrina tours

2 MINUTE INTERVIEW

FULL NAME: Peter Joseph Bradley
AGE: 43 1/2
OCCUPATION: Head of Commercial Bus and Coach, TfL Surface Transport
WHAT SHAPE IS THE COACH AND BUS INDUSTRY IN? Moving forward. There will always be issues and problems, but equally there are positive stories as well
WHAT ANNOYS YOU MOST ABOUT IT? Those who will not communicate the problems they are experiencing because they don't believe anything will be done about it
WHO, IF ANYONE, WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE INDUSTRY, AND WHY? Frank Pick, the first deputy chairman of London Transport
WHICH EVENT OF THE LAST 50 YEARS HAS CAUSED IT THE MOST DAMAGE? The private car being used for journeys that are much more efficiently undertaken by public transport
WHAT'S THE PUNCHLINE OF YOUR FAVOURITE JOKE? 'Because they sang him Snappy Birthday' (supplied by my six-year-old son, David)
WHO, WHETHER ALIVE OR DEAD, FICTIONAL OR REAL, WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE AS PASSENGERS ON A LONG JOURNEY? CS Lewis, Nelson Mandela, and my colleague Richard Shirley for his dry sense of humour
AND WHERE WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO BE HEADING? Snowdonia on a cloudless day

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British Travel Trade Fair
1-2 March 2006
NEC, Birmingham

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British Travel Trade Fair would like to thank Redwing Coaches for their help and contribution to this years' creative theme.

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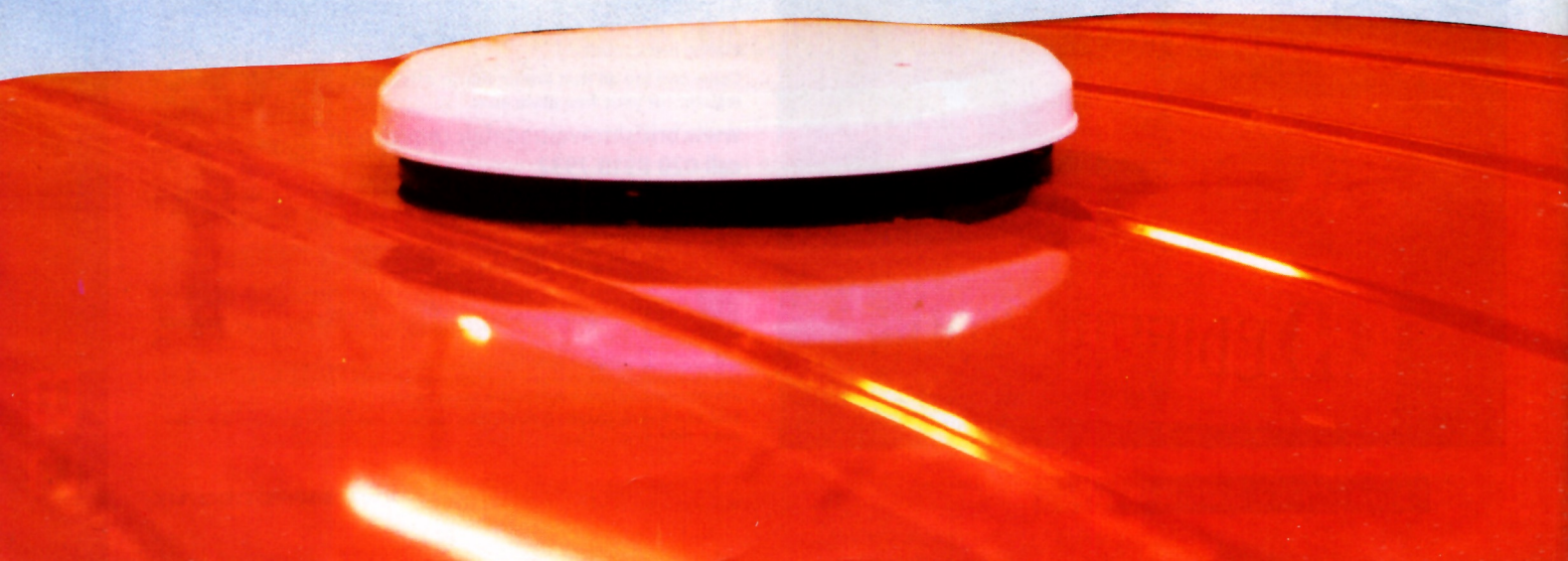
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